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SERIES

OF

POPULAR ESSAYS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

PRINCIPLES ESSENTIALLY CONNECTED

WITH THE IMPROVEMENT

OF THE UNDERSTANDING, THE IMAGINATION, AND THE HEART.

BY ELIZABETH HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF LETTERS ON THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION, COTTAGERS OF GLENBURNIE, &c.

Accuse not Nature, she hath done her part:
Do thou but thine, and be not diffident
Of Wisdom; she deserts thee not, if thou
Dismiss not her.—— MILTON.

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ESSAY IV.

ON THE

PROPENSITY TO MAGNIFY

THE IDEA OF

SELF.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE PROPENSITY TO MAGNIFY THE IDEA OF SELF.

CHAPTER VI.

AMBITION.

On the desire of power, as influenced by the selfish principle. Connexion between these illustrated. Consequences of ambition. Examples.

OF all the desires which agitate the human breast, the love of power is the most permanent and the most conspicuous; and that wherein the operation of the propensity to magnify the idea of self is rendered most completely obvious.

But, though it be also in the love of power that the evil nature of the selfish

principle is most fully displayed, such is the influence of the same principle in our hearts, that we are led to shut our eyes to its malignity, and to give to successful ambition the involuntary tribute of sympathy and admiration. The possessor of power is, to every man that is not either raised very much above, or sunk very much beneath the ordinary standard of human nature, an object of respect, or of envy, or of hatred. Whoever has obtained that preeminence, which is the constant object of ambition, is never regarded with indifference. When power has descended as an inheritance, the possessor of it is so identified, in our imaginations, with the high station he fills, that, however little respect may be due to his personal character, we seldom fail to take an unusual interest in his feelings and fortunes. Our sympathy with these forms a connexion between us and the exalted personage, who, though he perhaps has no dominion over our wills, enjoys the power of dictating to the wills

of numbers of our fellow-creatures. In our eagerness to participate in the glory he thence enjoys, we readily identify ourselves with him, and participate in all his joys and sorrows. "A stranger to human nature," says Smith, "who saw the indifference of men about the misery of their inferiors, and the regret and indignation which they feel for the misfortunes and sufferings of those above them, would be apt to imagine, that pain must be more agonizing, and death more terrible, to persons of high rank, than to persons of meaner station."*

We do not, however, sympathize in the same manner with him who has been but recently exalted to a distinguished station; but, on the contrary, continuing to identify him with the condition in which he was formerly placed, consider his exercise of the power he has obtained, in the light

* Theory of Moral Sentiment.

of unwarrantable presumption: nor is it until he can by some means connect with this new-born authority the idea of self, that it becomes to us an object of respect. Sooner or latter, however, successful ambition is sure of obtaining our admiration; for, in contemplating the noble daring of the ambitious spirit, the extraordinary energies of mind displayed in all the schemes and all the acts which conspired to conduct him to the eminence on which we see him placed, we behold him as connected with us by a common nature, and feel the idea of self expand in our hearts, as his actions pass in review before us. Our attention is thenceforth no longer directed to the pernicious effects resulting from his ambition; nor to the heavy load of guilt incurred by the enormous crimes, which, in the course of his adventures, he was in a manner compelled to perpetrate. We are so completely occupied in observing the extraordinary powers of his mind, and the extraordinary exertions which these enabled him to make,

that circumstances still more worthy of our observation escape our notice. May we not infer, that it is to the strength of the propensity to magnify the idea of self, that the memoirs of heroes have such power to fascinate, and to charm the imagination?

Let us now proceed to examine the operation of the love of power, in the minds of the ambitious. It is the aim of ambition, as it is the desire of pride, to bring the wills of others into subjection; but ambition does not, like pride, glut and fatten in secret; neither does it, like vanity, seek to enlarge the idea of self, by exaggerating it in the mirror of your opinion, but by really identifying with self all that it has found means to controul; all that it can move by its will, and sway by its authority.

History is little else than a record of the crimes to which this peculiar operation of the propensity to enlarge the idea of self has given birth. We there behold man, in

every stage of society, incessantly struggling to obtain dominion over the wills of his fellow men; and magnifying the idea of self, in exact proportion to the numbers of those with whom he becomes thus identified.

In the chief of the savage tribe, in the feudal chieftain, and in the imperial tyrant, we see the same passion operating in almost the same manner. We see it in all to be alike active and alike insatiable; never to be appeased or gratified while there remains within its reach one who refuses to deliver up his will, or who dares to exercise it independently of the tyrant's controul. But where is the Cyclops who, by the strength of his arm, can subdue the spirit? By what magic does the ambitious leader form the chains, by which he binds to his fortunes the implements of his despotism; thus enabling him to extend his power, by means of those on whom he has imposed the yoke, and who become willing instruments in

bringing others into a similar state of subjection?

The selfish principle operating in the hearts of the vanquished, as soon as all connexion with the objects with which they had formerly been identified is dissolved, seeks its gratification in other objects; and as none in such circumstances offer, that are so likely to engage the attention as the glory of the conqueror, they are easily led to identify themselves with him. It is thus, in the desire to enlarge the idea of self, that those magic cords are formed, which bind the conquered to the fortunes of the hero by whose victorious arms they have been subdued.

By identifying himself with the chief who now is *his*, the yoke is transformed into a badge of honour; by every accession of power, which his arm helps to achieve for the man by whose will his will is governed, the idea of self expands: and thus,

by sharing in his master's glory, he augments his own. Even while conscious that he is himself a slave, he glories in power; for by identifying himself with his lord, all the power he possesses belongs in some degree to him: And hence his anxiety for extending it. Hence the alacrity with which he enters on every service of danger; risking his life in order to destroy the lives of fellow-creatures who never offended him, but who, in not chusing to identify themselves with the chief with whom he is identified, become objects of his hatred and resentment.

Thus, the wills of the many become not so properly subjected by, as incorporated with, the will of the individual who dominates.

When we consider how vast a proportion of the habitable parts of the globe has, from time immemorial, been under the absolute dominion of a few sovereign despots,

in whose individual minds the minds and wills of all the countless millions over whom they reigned were immersed, it is some consolation to perceive, that the same principle which actuates the tyrant, affords to his slaves the means of participating in the tyrant's gratification; and thus renders them insensible to the misery of their fate. So far from wishing to diminish the power which enthrals them, they glory in extending it; for, in the idea of the power and greatness of him with whom they are identified, they find a balm for every wound. When inured by time to this miserable condition, men do not only kiss, but adore the rod!

It is, accordingly, only where the vassal is placed at such a distance from his sovereign lord, as to prevent the possibility of forming with him any ideal connexion, that he appears to feel the resignation of his free-will as an evil. Considering the substitute who governs by deputation from

the sovereign, as his fellow-slave, he feels his rule to be oppression, his yoke a grievance, and readily identifies himself with any bold adventurer who chuses to set up for himself. Hence the perpetual rebellions which have incessantly afflicted the remote parts of all despotic empires. When it is by the attainment of absolute power, that the gratification of the selfish principle has been procured, while the propensity to enlarge the idea of self continues to operate, the power obtained will never voluntarily be relinquished. The manner of exercising power may indeed assume a milder form; and wherever the Christian religion has been introduced, the melioration of the spirit of despotism has been one of the happy consequences of its introduction. But it is only in the minds of individuals that the religion of Christ has effected the subjugation of the selfish principle; and perhaps there is no situation so unfavourable for the production of this blessed

change of heart, as that of unlimited power.

In the dark ages which succeeded the first preaching of the gospel, we have indeed many examples of kings and queens descending from their thrones at the call of superstition, and devoting themselves to the gloomy austerities of the cloister; but we have no reason to conclude, that the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, did not impel them to embrace a mode of life, which was the certain means of procuring for them the honour and renown of saintship. We may be the more inclined to suspect the purity of their motives, as we find them equally bent on subjugating the wills of others *to their wills*, in either situation; and never, not even in one solitary instance, encouraging that freedom of thought, which they must have known to be the undoubted privilege of all whom Christ had made free. Wherever the feudal system prevailed, it was only the few to whom the en-

joyment of power was a birth-right, that were deemed entitled to any portion of civil or religious liberty: in those few, the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, impelled the bold to procure by valour an increase of the power they already possessed, and directed the wisdom of the wise to the same object; but whether it were by policy or force of arms, it was still to obtain a mastery over the wills of others that was the prime aim of their ambition. It is not, therefore, to any relinquishment of power on the part of their superiors, that those, of whose wills they had made property, were in any instance indebted for emancipation. Nor, while the inferior was gratified by identifying himself with his lord, was freedom the object of his wishes. But in the struggle for power which took place among the great, this ideal identification was frequently dissolved, and the propensity to enlarge the idea of self led men of the same rank to form bonds of union, which served to enable them to exercise a will of

their own. No sooner had they obtained an object wherewith to connect the idea of self, than they willingly threw off the yoke: And were sometimes encouraged to do so by the monarch, who, finding his sovereign will limited and controlled by the wills of his barons, naturally wished to obtain over them the same dominion that they had obtained over their inferior vassals; and, without any feeling for the oppressed and miserable situation of that numerous class of his fellow-creatures, he supported them in asserting their pretensions to the exercise of will in certain cases, independent of the will of their lords.

In England, a concurrence of circumstances favourable to the advancement of their claims, enabled them to extort acknowledgments of them in the form of laws and charters; and thus was gradually formed a constitution more favourable to virtue and to happiness, because better calculated to restrain the operation of the

selfish principle within equally proportioned limits, than any that the world has ever seen.

In other nations, the struggle for power between the monarch and the great vassals of the crown, though it for a short time produced every where the same results, terminated less happily for the people. The sovereign having wrested from his nobles that power over the wills of their inferior vassals, which they had heretofore enjoyed, and rendered the wills of the nobles subservient to his own, assumed a right over the property of which he had thus despoiled them; a property infinitely more valuable in his eyes, than land or gold. The wills of the people now belonged exclusively to him. The sovereignty he exerted over them became his most valued privilege; and the farther he could extend that sovereignty, the farther did his ideas of self extend.

Nor in those states which maintained the boast of independence, did the liberty, of which they were so proud, diffuse its blessings through all ranks in the community. It was, on the contrary, confined to the few in whose hands the powers of government were lodged, and was deemed their rightful and exclusive privilege. Each of the individuals composing the oligarchy, by identifying himself with the others, was, in his own mind, the sole and despotic sovereign of the state. The wills of the people merged in his: no longer regarded as his fellow-men, they were, like the throne on which he sat, formed for the sole purpose of exalting him. But though, by the operation of the propensity to magnify the idea of self, he was enabled to assume to himself all the glory which he, in reality, only shared with his compeers, the people of whom he thus, in his own mind, made property, could not identify themselves with him individually, without committing treason against the state. Hence the ex-

treme jealousy of all oligarchical governments; which, in proportion as they become despotic, necessarily become weak.

The same observation might, perhaps, be found equally to apply to democracies; in which the party, who for the time being has obtained the ascendency, may be considered as despotic. The opposition made to its authority is, indeed, in this instance, not treasonable, it is only termed factious. But in every triumph obtained by the ruling power, over the wills and opinions of its political opponents, every individual of the party which composes it, obtains an enlargement of the idea of self; producing in all the members of the opposite faction, the feelings and passions consequent on every mortification of the selfish principle. It is evident that such triumphs, frequently repeated, must be fatal to that liberty in which the republican glories. Thus, the love of power, when carried to excess, proves the destruction of all the instru-

ments by which it wrought; till, in the end, all are brought under the subjection of some dominating mind, with whom they must identify themselves, or perish.

It at first view seems strange, that the propensity to enlarge the idea of self should, in its operation under a republican form of government, always prove destructive of liberty; but the necessity which every individual there experiences, of uniting himself with a faction, in whose ascendency he hopes to obtain, in idea, that power over the wills of his fellow-citizens, which he cannot individually enjoy, tends eventually to give to one party a decided preponderance, and thus paves the way for despotism. The counteracting circumstance which retards this lamentable conclusion of the history of a free people, is the intellectual energy that inevitably results from a free exercise of the intellectual powers. The greatest, perhaps the only great advantage, resulting from a democra-

tical form of government is, that, by not laying restraint on any of the powers of the mind, it permits it to expand in whatever direction its attention is, from peculiar circumstances, most frequently engaged. The value of this privilege may best be ascertained, by examining the nature of the fruits it has produced. To the traveller, who, wrapt in astonishment, beholds what yet remains of the grandeur and magnificence of ancient Greece, these are apparent in the sublime conceptions of the artist, indelibly impressed on the material objects, which may be said to have received from his genius a new creation. But still more astonishing does the illustrious proofs of mental energy, given in the history, and evinced in the writings of that extraordinary people, appear to the contemplative philosopher, who perceives, that to whatever class of objects the attention was directed, their talents were equally conspicuous. Such were the consequences of not only being permitted, but, by the circum-

stances peculiar to the inhabitants of ancient Greece, in a manner compelled, to exercise all the powers of the mind; and this without being restrained to any particular class of objects, or limited within any prescribed bounds.

Never, where supreme power is lodged in an individual, can the intellectual faculties of the people be permitted thus to expand. Freedom of thought, in such instances, belongs only of right to the sovereign. It is he alone who is supposed possessed of the powers of reason. In his individual mind all the intellectual faculties of his subjects are in his own idea absorbed. These constitute an essential part of his greatness. And when, in his clemency, he permits any of the intellectual powers to be exercised by his subjects, he prescribes the limits within which they are to act, and with keen-eyed jealousy watches their operations, lest they should overleap the bounds prescribed.

It is not surprising, that the intellectual powers, thus held in captivity, should languish, and become inert and feeble, and incapable of being excited, except on that class of objects to which the attention has, by the will of the despot, been directed.

That this is the actual situation of every country in which despotism has been completely established, will not, I imagine, be disputed. There, the sciences on which the tyrant has not imposed his *veto* may sometimes be seen to flourish; there, the arts which he chuses to encourage may sometimes be prosecuted with success: but these sciences and arts afford employment to a very small portion of the population of a country. The great mass of mind must necessarily be dormant; and the intellectual powers of the people in general, being exercised on trifling objects, will sink to the same low level as the objects of their attention.

Into this degraded state must every nation be brought, that submits implicitly to a tyrant's will: But it is in the degradation of the people over whom he reigns, that he is in his own idea exalted; for it is not until he has obtained a complete ascendency over their wills, that he can multiply in idea the powers of his own individual mind. Not satisfied with exercising dominion over all their mental faculties and physical powers, he sometimes claims the government of their consciences, and aspires to be to them in the place of God. He presents himself as the dispenser of the divine favour, the interpreter of the divine will; and assumes it as his right, his unquestionable right, to dictate to his fellow-creatures the form and manner of worshipping their Creator: nor must they, without his permission, and according to the rules which he prescribes, presume to approach the divine Being, at whose dread tribunal king and subject must ere long appear, stripped of all they have falsely called their own.

It is not the will of God, but the will of him who thus endeavours to identify himself with God, that they are required to obey; for over their reason, their sentiments, and opinions, he deems himself vested with absolute authority. Every attempt to inquire into the validity of his right to interfere between the soul of man and his Creator and Judge, is construed into rebellion; every deduction of reason, unlicensed by authority, is contraband; every prayer uttered by the voice, or breathed by the heart, to the Most High, is criminal in the eyes of him who impiously aspires to power over the reason, and the heart! To such monstrous lengths does the indulgence of the selfish propensity extend, when circumstances are favourable to its extension. Such are the effects that naturally result from its unrestrained operation. And as it is only in situations favourable to the attainment of power, that the insatiable nature of ambition is rendered conspicuous, I hope I shall not be deemed guilty of impropriety,

for having endeavoured to illustrate it by such examples.

It will however be observed, that it is not from rank or station, or the possession of authority, that I have described the love of power to derive its malignity; but from the desire of magnifying the idea of self, by obtaining that absolute controul over the wills of others, which is necessary towards procuring an enlargement of that idea in the minds of the ambitious.

Some of the pernicious consequences resulting from this monstrous attempt to absorb the powers and faculties of millions, in the operations of one individual mind, cannot be too forcibly urged on the attention. The propensity to magnify the idea of self, appears indeed to have been the prime agent in the revolutions of empires. By the universality of its operations have the few, in all ages of the world, and under every form of government, been enabled to

controul or subjugate the wills of the many: and in proportion as he who holds the supreme power in the state, is freed from the restraint which acknowledged laws impose on his ambition, will the desire of enlarging the idea of self be gratified. But the more inordinate this desire, and the more completely it is indulged, the more certainly does he destroy the means of its future gratification. In order to explain this seeming paradox, let it be observed, That the conqueror of an empire, and of the liberties of a people, extends the idea of self throughout the whole of the dynasty which he has established. In his desire of procuring to himself the gratification arising from the assurance of enjoying the power of subjecting the wills of millions to his will, he imposes a restraint on the exercise of the rational faculties in the minds of his subjects, by chaining their attention to a certain number of objects, or to objects of a certain class. It is, from the nature of the human mind, im-

possible, that this limited exercise of attention should not diminish the operation of intellect, and prove destructive of the mental energies: And as it is on these, that all the circumstances which constitute the greatness or the glory of nations ultimately depend, he thus destroys that by which the idea of self had been magnified in his breast. For, viewing all the wealth, grandeur, and power, produced by the industry, wisdom, taste, and valour of the people, as connected with the idea of self, there can be no doubt of the degree in which these circumstances must have tended to augment that idea; nor can there be any question, that in proportion as those sources of his glory diminish, the idea of self must suffer diminution.

Of the mortification he experiences, we may form a just conception, by observing with what anxiety he endeavours to obviate the evil. It is his will that the nation he governs should maintain a superiority

over rival nations; that it should be enriched by commerce and manufactures, be rendered plentiful by agriculture, and distinguished by the productions of genius in literature and the arts. But in order to magnify the idea of self, it is necessary that all this should be effected by his own individual mind. He therefore gives laws to commerce; prescribes rules to the manufacturer; issues edicts to the agriculturist; and points to science and literature the particular path in which he chuses them to proceed. And, though he finds by experience that all his labours are fruitless, and all his efforts vain, he perseveres in acting as if it were impossible, that, having made property of all the intellectual powers of his subjects, they should fail to operate through the medium of his single mind, as effectually as they would have operated in the minds of millions, where the ideas of each would, by communication, have tended to augment the aggregate of capacity and intelligence.

Meanwhile, the nation thus governed sinks into contempt; and the sovereign who has gloried in absorbing all the mass of mind in the idea of self, finds, when too late, that the people he has thus degraded are no longer capable of supporting his throne. Thus has the end of all dynasties, established in despotism, been facilitated by the inordinate gratification of the desire to magnify the idea of self.

But perhaps it may be objected, that it is in the lower orders of the people only, that the mental energies are extinguished by arbitrary government. Let us, however, trust to our observation, and we shall quickly perceive, that the evil is by no means confined to the inferior classes. Wherever the monarch enjoys unlimited power, it is the highest privilege of the privileged classes, to be permitted to identify themselves with their sovereign lord. According as this can be effected, the idea of self expands; and, completely satisfied

with this gratification, they willingly sacrifice all those powers of the understanding of which they are prohibited the exercise. It is their glory to adopt the tastes and opinions which prevail in the court with which they connect the idea of self. Their attention is thus directed to objects, which afford not any exercise to the noblest faculties of the mind. These, of consequence, become incapable of exertion. And thus, by the nature of the objects through which they seek to extend the idea of self, do the upper ranks, in all arbitrary states, degenerate into a race of puny triflers, from which nothing great or noble is to be expected. Are we surprised, that minds so formed should shrink in the hour of trial, and be ready to betray the interests of their monarch, as soon as his falling fortunes renders him no longer an object wherewith they can connect the idea of self, without experiencing a sensible mortification? Alas! such conduct has too often occurred to appear extraordinary to

those in the least acquainted with the history of the rise and fall of empires. Still, however, we are so apt to sympathize in the feelings of those who have, by whatever means, obtained pre-eminence, that the pernicious effects resulting to the people, from the exercise of arbitrary power, seems to be compensated by the happiness enjoyed by the individual whom fortune has placed on the pinnacle of greatness.

Let us then take a nearer view of this envied happiness. Let us observe, in the first place, that, in proportion as the idea of self is enlarged, by obtaining power over the wills of others, every attempt at the exercise of will, on the part of those whose minds he has made property, must excite in him the painful emotions of jealousy, indignation, and resentment. The pride which is inseparable from the love of power, will, at the same time, inspire him with such notions of his having a right to controul the thoughts, opinions, and affections

of those who only breathe by his permission, as to justify every deed of cruelty. But it is impossible for the tyrant to forget, that cruelty naturally inspires hatred in the mind of those who are liable to become its victims; and, consequently, by every act of cruelty and injustice to which he is impelled by the fury of revenge, he increases in his own breast the dread of retaliation. Hence the watchful anxiety, hence the ever wakeful suspicion, that torments his bosom, and produces a state of agitation destructive of repose. According to the extent of his conquests, the numbers of human beings whose wills he has thus absorbed in his, serve to augment the idea of self; but they, at the same time, augment the number of his cares and anxieties, and through complete success he becomes completely wretched!

It is not remorse, but the vindictive passions, that plant thorns in the tyrant's pillow. Even when the voice of conscience

has been effectually silenced, they are productive of pain and misery.

May we not then pronounce it to be the greatest blessing that can befal a prince, to have the powers and prerogatives of royalty so accurately defined, as necessarily to lay a restraint on that selfish principle, which, when unrestrained, produces the extreme of misery? The sovereign of a free people, in participating in the happiness of his subjects, has a never-failing source of happiness; for the benevolent principle may have a perpetual exercise in his breast. A monarch in such circumstances may indeed be considered as the father of his people. His interest is identified with theirs. In their prosperity he is prosperous; and consequently, in the exercise of his royal functions, is in a manner compelled to study the general good. Such are the eminent advantages conferred on the kings of Great Britain by the Revolution; advantages, in comparison of which,

all the triumphs of despotism become contemptible. In no other nation is the glory of the monarch connected with the rights of the subject: In no other nation does the just exercise of the monarch's rights become the glory of the people: In no other nation is either prince or people placed in circumstances so favourable to the exercise of benevolence, nor, consequently, so favourable to private happiness and virtue.

If the gratification of the selfish propensity be, through whatever medium it operates, inimical to happiness, the love of power, which originates in that propensity, cannot be the object of moral approbation. It is nevertheless frequently mentioned in terms of high applause: but before we thus applaud, should we not do well to consider, whether it be not one of the strongest proofs of the influence of the selfish principle in our own hearts, that we are so much more inclined to sympathize in the feelings

of him whose ambition has been crowned with success, than in the feelings of those over whose wills he has obtained controul? In private life, the means of gratifying the love of power, appear at first view to be extremely limited; but they are so various and so abundant, that few are placed in situations that afford not some opportunity of resorting to them. Even in infancy the love of power is felt and gratified in a variety of ways; and every child spoiled by indulgence, shows the consequences that flow from its gratification, by exhibiting, in miniature, a picture of the same passions which agonize the bosom of the tyrant.

It is as an instrument of power, that wealth becomes an object of desire, to those who have little relish for the luxuries that wealth can purchase. But no sooner is wealth converted into a means of tyrannizing over the wills of others, (which is the constant aim of ambition,) than the

malignant passions consequent on every operation of the selfish principle, betray its origin. All who refuse to acknowledge as the rich man's prerogative, his right to dictate, become obnoxious to his displeasure. The poor who do not crouch to him, are regarded with scorn and jealousy, producing the pain arising from a temporary diminution of the idea of self in his mind; for, by every expression of independence, he is made sensible that his power is limited.

It may perhaps be objected, that the love of power is only rendered vicious from its being directed to vicious purposes. To this I answer, That when it arises from the desire to expand the idea of self, it is always vicious.

When divested of the selfish principle, vanity, pride, and ambition, are in their nature innocent, and even laudable. Take from vanity the desire of extending the

idea of self, by the display of qualities which are expected to excite your admiration or esteem, and vanity is converted into a laudable desire of sympathy and approbation. It is then a happy self-complacency, equally unproductive of guile and malice.

Divest pride of that exaggerated idea of self, which it secretly cherishes, and it is transformed into that dignity which accompanies just and correct notions of what is due from man to man. In like manner, the love of power, when stripped of the selfish propensity, becomes a principle of active benevolence. It is the energy of virtue; and where it thus exists, glories not so much in being the instrument of good, as in the good that is produced. By no opposition to its will, by no thwarting of its measures, can it be converted into malevolence.

CHAPTER VII.

Operation of the selfish principle in the spirit of party. Examples. Effects of party-spirit illustrated.

THE propensity to enlarge the idea of self is seldom, in private life, indulged without controul, unless under such circumstances as appear to give it the sanction of conscience. None but a madman, or one in whom the selfish principle has been pampered by the servile adulation of the only persons with whom he is in the habit of conversing, would openly avow having formed such high notions of himself, as implied a right to dictate to the wills, and sentiments, and opinions of all the world. But the right which few will dare to claim as their individual due, few scruple vehe-

mently to assert as the indisputable prerogative of the party with which they have identified themselves.

If the evil spirit whom we are taught to consider as the enemy of mankind, and against whose activity and diligence we are taught to guard, was ever permitted to lay a hidden snare for the souls of men, that snare is *party*. It is here, that the arch-seducer has most ample means of accomplishing his perfidious end. Here, that his potent spells have power to charm the conscience into a profound repose, while all the malignant passions are permitted to put forth their strength. Here, that the benevolent affections are poisoned, or hushed to silence; that piety becomes lethargic; and devotion, instead of ascending to the universal Father on wings of love, is directed towards some idol of the imagination, formed and framed by the evil devices of man's corrupted heart.

That it is from identifying ourselves with the party we espouse; and that it is the propensities to enlarge the idea of self, which leads us thus to identify ourselves with those with whom the idea of self can be connected, will not, I imagine, be very difficult to prove.

On entering on the examination of this point, it may be advisable, in the first place, to inquire, What are the nature, and what the strength of those emotions that are produced in us, on reading or hearing of the temporary triumphs of error and injustice, in instances in which we are not otherwise concerned, than as our love of truth and justice leads us to take part with the oppressed? In such cases, our hearts glow with indignation against the oppressor; we ardently desire to hear of his having received the punishment due to his offence; and feel dissatisfied until truth obtains a complete ascendency over error and falsehood. But these feelings are un-

accompanied by malice: They never exceed the bounds that reason warrants: The hatred produced in us by the contemplation of the wicked deed, seldom transports us into wrath, or, if it do, the wrath is but momentary. I believe it will be found ever thus, where no idea of self can possibly be connected either with the person who does the wrong, or with him who suffers.

The very different manner in which we are agitated, when the conduct either of the party we espouse, or the party we oppose, is called in question, clearly shows how completely we associate the idea of self with the party with which we are connected. In the ascendency of our party we consider ourselves to be triumphant; and small as is the weight that we perhaps can throw into the scale, we, when it preponderates, take to ourselves the glory. Every attempt to reduce the size to which we, in idea, swell, is resented as the most outrageous offence. Our wrath in such

cases is not of the inoffensive nature of that which is called forth by the love of truth and justice: It is begotten by the selfish principle, and is, therefore, rancorous and malignant, and cruel and revengeful. In the history of mankind we have, alas! too many glaring proofs of the active operation of these passions, in every party that has obtained sufficient influence to be enabled to struggle for dominion over the minds of men. From history too we learn, what have constantly been the consequences of a complete triumph obtained by any party over *all* its opponents. The facts there recorded may convince us, that however just or true the principles which it at first appeared to be the sole object of the party to establish, this primary motive has ever been, in the plenitude of power, forgotten; and the liberties and interests of mankind, as far as circumstances would permit, made a sacrifice to the will of the victor. We have undoubted evidence that the selfish principle may be as strenuously, and as effectu-

ally exerted in the support of truth, as in the support of error. But soon is the lustre of truth obscured by the passions to which the selfish principle gives birth; for, merely to spread the knowledge of truth, would afford to these passions no gratification. We cannot so identify ourselves with what is in its nature general and universal, as to enlarge the idea of self, by connecting it with truths of that description. These are eternal and immutable; either placed within the reach of human reason, and in that case liable to be discovered by all who apply their faculties to the investigation of them, or, if above the reach of human reason to ascertain, can only be discovered to us by divine revelation.

As soon therefore as, from the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, we zealously endeavour to propagate truths of either description, we are, by the same propensity, compelled to mingle with the truth for which we contend, something of our own,

something to which the idea of self can be covertly attached: and I believe it will, upon a strict examination, be found, that it is for this extraneous matter that we most obstinately fight; the truths to which it was originally attached serving only as a salvo to our conscience, for the exercise of the malignant passions, which, in the heat of combat, are produced.

It is mortifying to refer to the history of the Christian church, for proof of this assertion; but as the view that is there established of the operation of the selfish principle, conveys the most important lesson on human weakness, a future section shall be devoted to the consideration of it; confining myself at present to such parts as may aid our inquiry into the nature of party-spirit in general.

In despotic states, the jealous nature of the government being inimical to free inquiry, the subjects left open for discussion

are few and trifling. But on these the selfish principle lays hold with as much avidity, and operates with as much ardour, as on subjects of more importance. If I am rightly informed, party-spirit rages in France at the present moment, with as much violence as it ever raged in any free state in Europe. Besides the partisans of the several theatres, who each consider their own glory to be augmented by every accession of splendid patronage procured to the establishment, either by the talents of the actors, or the zeal of their friends; every individual opera-dancer, singer, comedian, and tragedian, forms (if I may be allowed the figure) the nucleus of a distinct party, all who adhere to which are bound for the moment by one common tie. The superlative merits of the performer is the creed to which these zealots have subscribed; and which they impose upon others with as much bigotry, and as much zeal, as ever was shown in support of any of the infallible decrees of a Pope or

General Council. If the merit of the performer be so conspicuous as to be generally acknowledged, the party soon dissolves, for opposition is essential to its existence. It is in conquering opposition, that is to say, in making the opinions and sentiments of others conform to ours, that the selfish principle triumphs. Every triumph of this kind is attended with a sensible gratification, however trivial the cause; and where there are no other objects to contend for but those that are in themselves contemptible or insignificant, their multiplicity affords a compensation for their insignificancy. None of those frivolous objects can long engross the attention; but in frivolous society they come in perpetual succession; begetting, while they are objects of party-contention, all the passions of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge.

Where freedom of political discussion offers a wider and a nobler field for the exertion of human intellect, it affords an

opportunity for the selfish principle to operate, without any such apparent degradation of the character: for whatever side of the question people take in political controversy, they may still, from the nature of the subject, believe themselves engaged in the support of truth.

It is impossible that the rights and privileges of all the different orders, which have a political existence in our happy constitution, should be so exactly ascertained as not to afford matter of dispute. Impossible, likewise, that the love of power should in every order be so far restrained by respect to the rights of the other branches, as never to attempt encroaching on these rights. Every indication of such intended encroachment naturally excites alarm. But if the principles of the constitution have been well defined, and are generally understood, it should seem as if they ought to form a land-mark, which could never be removed without immediate detection. It

should likewise (anterior to our experience) seem natural, that if ever such attempt were made, either by the monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical branch, all the individuals that compose either of the other branches, would unite to repel the attempt. All this might, it should seem, be done in the spirit of pure benevolence. A constitution formed for the good of the whole, would thus, for the good of the whole, be preserved entire and uncorrupted; and great political questions be of all others the most easily determined, by a reference to acknowledged principles. Those who pretended not to the knowledge of those principles, would evidently, however much interested in the issue, have no right to take any share in the debate. The purblind might, with as much propriety, presume to decide on the distance between two objects placed beyond the reach of his vision; the disqualification in both instances being equally palpable. Among beings purely intellectual, establishments founded with a

view to the general happiness, would be sustained, or, if susceptible of improvement, be improved, according to the firm dictates of reason. The means proposed for supporting or improving them, might be discussed and canvassed; but the object, of promoting the general happiness, would never be lost sight of in the course of the debate. It would be the standard to which all would direct their eyes; the rallying point to which all would with alacrity return.

Now, let me ask, of which of the political parties that have, within the last hundred years, existed in this nation, can the above be with truth averred? I grant, that it is in defence of some general principle, that every party has at first been formed. The prerogatives and dignity of the crown, the liberties and privileges of the subject, though in the eye of the constitution they be equally sacred, and indeed inseparably connected with every idea of its preserva-

tion, must be in idea separated, before they can become objects of contention. In order to form a party, it is necessary that they should not be considered in conjunction, or as objects of equal interest, but that they should be opposed to each other, as things distinct, incongruous, and incompatible.

It is then the object of those who are ambitious of becoming the heads of a party, that they should, not only in their own eyes, but in the eyes of others, be so identified with the great leading principle which they are to defend, as shall render it impossible to oppose the one, without seeming to deny the other. Whether it be the regal prerogative, or the liberties of the people, of which they chuse to be the champions, loyalty or patriotism is to be considered as in its champion personified. The leader of the party is thus transformed into a sort of idol, to whom all who have identified themselves with the party bow the

knee. Nor is it sufficient to pay to him such a portion of incense as his merits seem to warrant; as the head of *our* party, his claims are too sacred to be strictly investigated.

The altars of the rival idol are meantime surrounded by adherents equally devoted, who assert his claims to supremacy with zeal no less fervent, no less sincere.

The interests of the several branches of the constitution, though in truth blended and inseparable, so that the destruction of one would be the ruin of all, are thus opposed to each other, as if they had actually been rent asunder; an evil which the violence of party has a manifest tendency to effect. But this evil, which would be equally deprecated by either party, enters not into the consideration of the partisan. He dreads nothing but the triumph of the opposing party; and would run all risks, even that of annihilating the constitution

he pretends to reverence, in order to ensure to his own party a victory.

In every victory obtained by his party he rejoices, not as he would rejoice in the triumph of truth over error, but as he would rejoice in a good that was strictly personal; for with his party he connects the idea of self. By every accession of strength to his party, by every triumph it obtains, he feels the idea of self enlarged. He becomes great in its greatness, and strong in its strength, and glories even in the personal accomplishments, the shining talents, or profound abilities of the individuals who belong to it, as if their genius, wisdom, or learning, were actually transferred to him. By thus identifying himself with his party, he naturally becomes inclined to palliate the vices by which any of its members are stained. However pure, however spotless his own heart and conduct, he views with indulgent lenity the impurities and crimes, for which no other

circumstance, but a meritorious adherence to party, could in his opinion atone. This, it may be observed, will be more or less the case, according to the character of him who is the head of the party for the time being; as every true partisan is bound, at all events, to consider him as infallible. If his conduct happens to be correct, that correctness will afford matter of triumph to his party, though not one of the number would have fallen off, or ventured to condemn him, on a conviction of the contrary. But if it be otherwise, he must nevertheless be still considered as immaculate.

There can be no doubt of the injury done to morals, by the false associations of good and evil that are thus produced. Let those who entertain a doubt concerning their injurious tendency, look back to the reign of the second Charles, when, by the prevalency of similar associations, loyalty and licentiousness became nearly synonymous, and

a scrupulous conscience considered as a sure mark of disaffection.

Nor, in the violence of party-strife, is the judgment less liable to be perverted than the morals. The attention of each party being exclusively directed to the arguments that support its cause, the reasoning powers have of course only a partial exercise. For reasons formerly given, it is not possible that by this partial exercise they can be as much invigorated and improved, as they would be were attention to be equally and fairly given to both sides of every question. But those who reason only for victory, seldom go aside in search of truth: nor need they; for were they to find her in possession of the adversary, they are bound, by all the laws of party-spirit, to conceal the discovery; and, as they know that all their assertions, however absurd or erroneous, will be sanctioned and supported by all who have enlisted under the same banners, they may, with impunity, advance what

doctrines they please. To obtain for their party a monopoly of the rights of private judgment, is the constant aim of every individual member. Consequently, every attempt made to assert an opinion opposite to those they chuse to dictate, is considered as an infringement of their acknowledged rights. A party is no longer a party, than while it is one and indivisible; and being incorporated for no other purpose than to afford to each individual the means of enlarging the idea of self, by connecting it with the power of the aggregate, whatever opposes, or tends to diminish that power, must be an object of peculiar aversion. Hence the rancorous antipathy against the genius and talents that appear in the party opposite. Hence the attempts made to traduce and to defame whatever qualities they possess, that are in their nature truly estimable. Hence the eagerness to exaggerate whatever is defective; to deny to virtuous actions their meed of praise, by questioning the motives from which

they spring; and to ascribe to the mere effects of human weakness, all the atrocity of vice!

The malignant passions that have here a manifest operation, are not here, as in other instances, restrained by the principles of moral rectitude. For, so strongly is the idea of moral evil associated with the idea of that party which opposes itself to the party we have embraced, that the most inveterate hatred of all who belong to it, appears to our misguided conscience in the light of a moral duty. For individuals of the hated party we may be inclined to make some allowance. Their virtues may be so obvious, as, in spite of our prejudices, to gain on our esteem; or, if obliged to converse with them, we may find their manners so engaging, as to excite in us some portion of affection: But to every member of the party, who is not personally known to us, we attach the idea of evil,—evil unqualified, unmixed with any portion of

good. They are not, indeed, considered by us as individuals having each his own peculiar share of merit and demerit; as beings, some of whom are ordained to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in everlasting glory, and some ready to sink into the gulf prepared for sin and for impenitence; but as having one individual character—aristocrat or democrat, whig or tory, blue or red, green or orange, whichever be, according to our creed, the term of opprobrium.

To those who are by profound ignorance utterly incapacitated from forming the slightest notion concerning the merits of the questions, that are to the chiefs of the party subjects of debate, some easy rule is absolutely necessary. For their use, party appellations have been contrived; and admirably has the contrivance answered the purpose for which it was designed. By it, those who can neither think nor reason, have a sure means of discovering right

from wrong, and of discriminating between true and false. As soon as they hear the term by which the opposite party is designated, affixed to the name of the speaker or writer, they know, without giving themselves the trouble to listen to his arguments, that all he says is wrong; all his statements false; all his conclusions dangerous.

By this happy expedient, a person of the meanest talents, from having connected the idea of *self* with the party he belongs to, feels himself entitled to look down with contempt on talents of the highest order in any of the opposite party. He enjoys an ideal superiority over the person he thus despises, and, without pretending to be able to answer, or even to understand his arguments, flatters himself with a triumph in his defeat. If those around him do not sympathize in the triumph, he is offended. The credit given to his adversary is resented as an injury; a downright attack upon the dearest and most incontrovertible pri-

vilege of his party, which claims a right of dictating to the opinions of all the world. In vain, by those to whom the arguments seemed demonstration, will that demonstration be urged as an apology for their acknowledgment of conviction; since, had they been true to their party, they neither would nor could have been convinced, by ought that came from any of the party opposite.

As it obviously affords no small gratification to the selfish principle in the breast of the individual, to contemplate himself in his party as infallible, we are not to wonder, that an hesitation concerning the validity of the claim, should in his mind be deemed equivalent to an act of hostility. Hence the jealousy and suspicion with which those who observe a strict neutrality, are constantly regarded by partisans of all denominations. The first step towards acquiring honour in their eyes, is to give up all freedom of judgment; and

to hate with perfect hatred, man, woman, and child, on whom they have fixed the term of reproach. "Come curse me this people," was the modest request made by Balak of old to the prophet;* and though it may not be repeated exactly in the same words, it is still addressed by the spirit of party to every one whose voice is imagined to have the smallest influence. "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom God hath not defied?" would be an answer not more acceptable to the partisan, than it was to the king of Moab, who, enraged by the opposition to his will, "clapped his hands together, and said, I called thee to curse mine enemies; and behold thou hast blessed them. Therefore flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee to great honour, but lo, the Lord hath held thee back from honour." How much and how frequently the principles of justice are in this manner

* See book of Numbers, chap. 23, &c.

outraged, must have been observed by every one; nor need we scruple to assert, that they are most liable to be thus outraged, by those who are most profoundly ignorant of the principles they condemn.

Can it be doubted, that whatever begets in us a propensity to hate our neighbour, to "curse whom God hath not cursed, to defy whom the Lord hath not defied," is detrimental to the virtue and happiness of society? And that this propensity is the inevitable consequence of identifying one's self with party, is extremely obvious. So obvious, indeed, as to be tacitly acknowledged, and even to form a principle of action: No person of common politeness thinking himself at liberty to praise, or even to mention in terms of approbation, the most noble, or generous, or magnanimous action, performed by one whose political sentiments are known to be in opposition to those of the present company. To praise, in general terms, the character

of a zealous whig to a zealous tory, or the character of a zealous tory to a zealous whig, would be deemed little short of insult. In delicacy to their feelings we must by all means avoid such disagreeable topics. We must by our insinuations endeavour to detract from the merit which it would give them pain to recognize; and if we would render ourselves very acceptable, we must be ready to ridicule the persons of those, whose virtues may be too conspicuous to be denied.

I appeal for the truth of this statement to every impartial spectator of what passes in society. Nay, I appeal to every one in whose breast the spirit of party has ever had any considerable influence. Let them say how far their benevolence has operated towards individuals of the opposite party. If hungry, they would give them meat; if naked, they would clothe them; if sick, they would visit them: But would they rejoice in discovering in them any peculiar

excellence? Would they joyfully proclaim the discovery? Would they gladly pay the tribute of esteem and approbation, and judge of the merit that claimed it, by the very same standard which they applied for judging of the merits of individuals with whom they were, through the medium of party, connected? If, on reflecting on their feelings and conduct, they cannot declare themselves to have been always thus impartial, they may be assured, that whatever be the avowed object of the party in which they and their friends have enlisted, whether it be the preservation of order, or the preservation of liberty; the prosecution of war, or the attainment of peace; it is neither by the love of peace, nor of war, nor of liberty, nor of order, that they have been influenced; but that it was the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, which led them so far to identify themselves with the party they espoused, as unconsciously to consider those who opposed it in the light of personal enemies.

In the operation of the malignant passions, we have the most certain proof of the existence of the selfish principle; for, as was before observed, never are any of these malignant passions produced by our love of what we believe to be in its nature good, or by our hatred to what we believe to be in its nature evil, where there is no imagined connexion between the idea of self, and the objects of our contemplation. When, therefore, we feel in our hearts a disposition to dislike, to censure, to degrade in the eyes of others, to rob of their just praise, to mortify, or in any way to injure persons who have rendered themselves obnoxious to us, by not joining in our party, we have, in this ill-will towards them, a certain and infallible proof of the operation of the selfish principle in our hearts. Let us, with courageous hands, rend the veil asunder which conceals its malignity from our view. Let us purify our hearts from all malice, and hasten to begin on earth that good will towards all, with

which we hope, and are confident we shall hereafter be filled; and wheresoever, and in whomsoever we find any virtue, any praise, let us unite ourselves to such by the cords of love; assured that it is our safest course to cleave to that which is good!

Such sentiments are held by the politician in contempt, as arguing an utter ignorance of the nature of our constitution, to the preservation of which, party is deemed as indispensable, as is the air of heaven to the preservation of animal and vegetable life.

But why is party thus necessary? Is it not because the feelings of patriotism, (which impose it as a duty to preserve in purity the constitution which is acknowledged to be so favourable to happiness,) are in general too feeble to excite vigilance or energy, unless quickened by a connection with the idea of self? Were it not from the universal operation of the selfish

principle, there would be no reason to apprehend, that those appointed to guard the peculiar rights and privileges of one of the branches of the legislature, should naturally and of course be disposed to make use of the power they possess, to the injury of the other branches. Were none to give up their understandings and their inclinations to the governors for the time being, but such as are impelled by sordid views of interest, the partisans of an administration would never become so numerous as to enable them to encroach upon the liberties of the people. But while an union with the possessors of power affords to individuals the means of gratifying the selfish propensity, multitudes will be impelled to identify themselves with those in power, and thus a party will be formed, increasing in numbers and strength, in proportion to the degree of power enjoyed by the chiefs, and which is in imagination enjoyed by every individual of the party.

It is in order to counteract the evils that may proceed from this operation of the selfish principle, that the same principle is called into action by the formation of an opposing party; which affords, to those who join it, equal opportunities of enlarging the idea of self, by appropriating to themselves the glory acquired by the talents or intrepidity of its leading members.

In either instance, some acknowledged truth, some principle of indisputable authority, will form the ostensible bond of union: But as truths of such nature are immutable, how does it happen, that when the leader of a party, whose talents were its glory, happens to be removed, the bond of union seems to be dissolved? While the power and influence acquired by the superior talents of the leader, afforded to all who identified themselves with him, a gratification of the selfish principle, the opinions for which he contended were held in-

fallible. Have they then changed their nature, that they are no longer deemed worthy of support? No. The opinions, as far as they corresponded with truth, retain their authority, and will still be acknowledged and maintained by the few, who, in supporting them, had no other view than that of performing the duty they owed to truth; but on all who, in contending for them, contended merely for what was the means of procuring an enlargement of the idea of self, they will seem to have lost their influence. The subject, of whatever nature it may be, will then be discussed with fairness, and decided according to its real merits; for though no moderation, no wisdom, no evidence of good intention, could formerly have induced them to listen to any arguments in favour of opinions, opposite to those adopted by their party, they have now no motive for withholding their attention from what is advanced on either side; for with neither is the idea of self any longer connected.

These observations apply equally to parties of every description; for wherever party-spirit enters, the zeal for the establishment of the opinions embraced by the party with whom the individual is identified, will insensibly be permitted to supersede the zeal for the establishment of truth; nor is it until party-spirit has subsided, that truth will have any chance of appearing in her true colours and just proportions. According to the degree in which party-spirit prevails, will the spirit of injustice and malignity be apparent; and according as the love of truth has acquired in the breast an influence so powerful as to transcend the operation of the selfish principle, will benevolence and justice be found to maintain their ascendency, in spite of all the irritation of opposition. But, alas! "It is not in man to direct his steps." So universally does the propensity to enlarge the idea of self operate in the human heart, that even where we imagine truth to be the object of our primary regard, we are apt soon

to lose sight of the object, and to embrace in its stead the adventitious circumstances, by which, when it first met our eye, it had been accidentally enveloped. To these we give the name of truth; and with these we at the same time connect the idea of self; so that, as we establish the connexion between these circumstances and truth, we establish our connexion with it. But, in order to effect this, we must bring the minds of others to see the truth in question exactly as it is viewed by us. With all whom we prevail on thus to view it, we identify ourselves; and thus, whatever be the nature of the truth we desire to establish, it procures to us the gratification of that propensity in which all party-zeal and party-strife originates.

It is mortifying to reflect how frequently, in science, in literature, and in the arts, this party-spirit has excited the activity of minds, in which the desire of advancing knowledge, or of establishing truth, would

not have had sufficient power to lead to any strenuous exertion. But if, by such means, knowledge has, in some instances, been advanced, it has, perhaps, in a still greater number of instances, been retarded by the operation of this principle. For example: At no very distant period, the knowledge of the Latin tongue, which had for ages afforded means of enlarging the idea of self in all who had acquired it, begot in those to whom it had procured this gratification, a deadly hatred towards the Greek language, and all who professed to study or admire it. The party of the Latins was long formidable, and could boast of enrolling among its members some of the greatest names to which the country has given birth. The party of the Grecians did not, however, lose ground. The attack and the defence was made with equal fury; and all the selfish and malignant passions were on each side called forth in the course of the debate. At length a compromise happily

took place; a coalition followed; and, under the common appellation of the learned, they formed a common party, all the members of which were bound to repel every attempt made by the unlearned to think or reason, as an encroachment on their prerogative.

Numerous and violent were the contentions among the learned, to which other points gave birth: all originating in the spirit of party, and only differing from other factions, in having the name of some ancient sage or philosopher, instead of that of a modern statesman or reformer, inscribed upon their banners. By the diffusion of knowledge, the influence of these talismans has been destroyed; but has the propensity to enlarge the idea of self found no substitute for them? Do the sons of science, do those to whom learning has opened all her stores, always appear willing to admit those who possess the same advan-

tages to a participation in their glory? No. This conduct, however conducive to the general interests of science and literature, would not effectually answer the purpose of magnifying the idea of self; and, therefore, instead of identifying themselves with the interests of science in general, they identify all knowledge, all science, with that with which the idea of self is particularly connected. Thus we hear men speak of the University in which they have been educated, as the only place where knowledge can have its lawful birth. All that does not issue from thence is considered as illegitimate; nor can talents of the highest order, the most profound erudition, the most extensive acquirement, compensate the deficiency.

Were it possible to imagine, that any learned University ever conferred its honours on what is vulgarly termed *a blockhead*, we might easily conceive what gratification it must afford to such a person,

to be thus, as it were, lawfully empowered to look down with contempt on all who boast not of any connexion with the seat of learning, with which he is in his own mind identified. The meanness, or mediocrity of his talents, though they render his acquirements useless to himself and to the world, may be admitted as an apology for the eagerness he evinces to assert the superiority of that from which he derives his sole title to distinction. But that persons who are conscious of possessing abilities and acquirements that entitle them to respect and admiration, should relinquish their individual pretensions, and endeavour to magnify the idea of self, by such a participation in the glory of their school as they can only share in common with its meanest members, is indeed astonishing. And if the annals of learning afford any such examples, they may be adduced as a proof, that the cultivation of intellect does not necessarily diminish the operation of the selfish principle.

Were we to prosecute the inquiry a little further, we should perhaps have ample reason to conclude, that whatever has tended to exercise and improve the intellectual powers, by increasing the sphere of their operation, has at all times been converted by the selfish principle into a mean of enlarging the idea of self, and has no sooner been rendered subservient to this purpose than it has become injurious to the interests of society, by arresting the progress of knowledge. We might perceive, that every step, in the slow march of mind towards the discovery of truth, has been considered by those who attained it, not as a step, but as the *ne plus ultra;* and all attempts to move beyond have consequently for a time been furiously repelled. Nor could it fail to be so, when those who had advanced thus far so completely identified themselves with the acquirement made, as to render the glory it received their own. If any were permitted to rise a step above, its glory would be diminished, and conse-

quently the idea of self would be diminished. The obstacles thus presented to freedom of inquiry, have sometimes seemed so unsurmountable, as to remain in force for ages.

Nor was it only the notions and opinions acquired, that were thus defended on account of their connexion with the idea of self; the very method of acquiring them must be considered as perfect, and consequently not susceptible of improvement. It is, I believe, to the honourable motive of respect for the wisdom of our ancestors, that the resistance made to every improvement in usages that have been sanctioned by time, has been generally ascribed. But where no idea of self is connected with the usage in question, the opposition made to improving it is never carried beyond what reason warrants. The difference between innovation and improvement seems indeed to consist in this, that the innovator, connecting the idea of self with his invention,

aims only at obtaining means of extending that idea; while the improver acts from purer and higher motives, and aims, not at promoting his own glory, or, which is indeed the same thing, the glory of his party, but at producing a real and essential benefit, in which friends and foes may share. If the advantages resulting from the improvements he has suggested, be of a nature too obvious to be denied, his plans will be adopted; and, so long as he is contented with the enjoyment of the heart-felt satisfaction arising from the consciousness of having benefited mankind by his inventions, he will be permitted to enjoy that happiness in peace. But the moment that he shows a disposition to glory in his success, and to render his inventions the means of extending the idea of self, his pretensions are scrutinized with jealousy; and to all who do not identify themselves with him, he becomes an object of envy or aversion. It may not be easy to detract from the merit of his inventions, but it is

always easy to discover imperfections in the man; and by party-spirit these are associated with the inventions, so as to depreciate their value. If he already belongs to any particular sect or party, all with whom he is thus identified will experience an expansion of the idea of self, in the glory he acquires from his inventions, and will consequently be inclined to exaggerate their importance; while, on the other hand, all the erroneous opinions, religious or political, ascribed to his party, will be brought forward in triumph by his opponents; and while party-spirit predominates, be considered as convincing evidence, that his discoveries, whatever be the benefit resulting from them, may justly be contemned.

"Can any good come out of Nazareth?" seems, indeed, by partisans of all descriptions, to be considered as a species of argument the most unanswerable; and it is by making use of it, that we justify to our-

selves the injustice of which we are guilty, in withholding the tribute of applause and honour due to every extraordinary exertion of the intellectual powers applied to beneficent purposes, and from which any essential benefit has been derived. In support of the above observations we may appeal to the page of history, which exhibits such numerous proofs of national ingratitude, as leaves no room to doubt of the universal operation of that principle, which excites men to pull down and depress whatever does not, by its connexion with the idea of self, tend to procure an extension of that idea.

Do we still want farther proofs of the universality of this propensity? Let us behold its operations in one other instance, an instance sufficiently extensive, as it comprehends the whole of the human race; which we may view as divided by the difference of sex into two distinct parties; every individual of each sex being, in his

or her mind, identified with the whole of the sex to which he or she individually belongs. This is, for reasons to be hereafter mentioned, more particularly observable with regard to my own sex; every woman considering every reflection injurious to the sex, as injurious to herself, and evincing, by the warmth with which she enters on the defence of the sex in general, how completely she identifies herself with that part of the species. Is the sex described as inferior in strength of intellect?—how anxiously do we seek to establish proofs of our equality; or, should these not be admitted, how ready are we to accuse all men of injustice! Every instance of the tyranny of man, evinced in the treatment of our sex, we consider, not as proofs of the depravity of our common nature, but as originating in passions by which *he* alone is actuated, and from which *we*, though participating in his nature, are totally exempt. How entirely this corres-

ponds with what has been observed of the nature of party-spirit, is sufficiently obvious.

Women who possess strong feelings and generous hearts, seldom fail, where each sex is concerned, to stand forth as the champions of their own, and when blame probably attaches in equal portions to both, to consider the other only as blame-worthy; nor do they, in the warmth of their zeal, perceive that they thus admit that inferiority, which, in another point of view, they protest against, but which is necessarily implied in being liable to seduction. Anxious, not only to defend the character, but to extend the privileges of the sex with which the idea of self is particularly connected, every circumstance which marks their situation in society is considered as a grievance. By looking merely to what would promote the gratification of the selfish principle, they overlook or despise the advantages which the sex, in some respects,

in a superior degree enjoys, in this probationary state of existence. Having alluded to this in a former publication, I shall, for fear of repeating myself, proceed to inquire, why this propensity to enlarge the idea of self does not, in this instance, seem to operate exactly in the same manner in the other sex. Why is not every individual man roused to indignation, by imputations that apply to his sex in general? Because the idea of self is, in his mind, connected, not with his sex, but with his species, of which he considers the other sex not as a moiety, but as a necessary adjunct. In the savage state, where physical strength is power, the weaker must of course fall under the dominion of the stronger sex; and in that state we have seen in what manner man procures an extension of the idea of self, by contemplating it in connexion with all the powers and faculties of the human beings of whom he has made property. As to the females who compose a part of that property, it is observed by

Dr Robertson, that "servitude is a name too mild to describe their wretched state. A wife among most tribes is no better than a beast of burden, destined to every office of labour and fatigue. While the men loiter out the day in sloth, or spend it in amusement, the women are condemned to incessant toil. Tasks are imposed upon them without pity, and services are received without complacence or gratitude. Every circumstance reminds women of this mortifying inferiority. They must approach their lords with reverence, they must regard them as more exalted beings, and are not even permitted to eat in their presence."

As the operations of intellect come, in the progress of civilization, to be appreciated beyond the mere exertions of physical strength, it is according to the degree in which he enjoys the power of subjecting the minds and the wills of numbers, that the idea of self expands in the mind of man.

Women are then no longer subjected to the cruel hardships of incessant labour and fatigue; for it is not now by his exemption from labour, that man's superiority is to be asserted. It is on the exertions of intellect that he rests his claim: and thenceforth a complete dominion over the minds, a complete subjugation of the intellectual powers of the feebler sex, becomes essential to the gratification of the selfish principle in his heart. The desire of power here operates exactly as it operates in every other instance; and is gratified, in proportion as it can annihilate the individuality of the beings, who, viewed in connexion with the idea of self, serve to augment that idea.

The consequences that flow from this destruction of mind, have been described in the sketch presented of arbitrary government; where it was attempted to prove, that despotism never fails to destroy those intellectual powers, of whose operations it assumes the controul, and prescribes the

limits. But, as no experience of the consequences can induce the despot to relinquish his pretensions, he continues strenuously to oppose every attempt at the exertion of intellect, which, by giving individuality to the character, would render it impossible for him to contemplate himself as the sole intelligence within the nation he governs.

Very similar to this, in every nation unenlightened by Christianity, has been the relative situation of the sexes. Impelled by the desire of magnifying the idea of self, man has ever been prone to view the sex inferior to his in physical strength, not as composed of individuals separately possessed of faculties and affections common to the species, but as a whole, and that whole subject to his controul. As society advances in knowledge and refinement, the limits he prescribes to the exercise of intellect in the sex is enlarged; but the free use of reason is a boon

seldom granted, or rather never granted without reluctance, except by very superiorly enlightened minds. To such minds, the general interests of society appear far more important than the gratification of the selfish principle in any of its modifications. Instead of seeking to enlarge the idea of self, by exercising dominion over the mental powers of any of their species, they endeavour to break the fetters of prejudice, to throw wide the gates of knowledge, and to encourage every human being to improve and exercise those talents, for the improvement and cultivation of which, every human being is, without exception, to be accountable to Him by whom they were bestowed.

CHAPTER VIII.

Origin of idolatry. Pagan superstition. Sects of philosophy. Doctrines taught in the heathen schools favourable to the indulgence of the selfish principle.

WHATEVER gratification the selfish principle may derive, from that incorporation of the powers, faculties, and qualities, of a number of individuals in one body, described by the term *party*, that gratification is still further enhanced, when, besides the powers and qualities of human beings, we can throw a portion of what is *super-human* into the general stock. We then identify ourselves, not only with all the glory resulting from the aggregate power, wealth, strength, talents, and influence, of those

with whom we are incorporated and made one, but identify ourselves with the superior power of a superior nature. It is no wonder that the pride which springs from this gratification of the selfish principle, exceeds all other pride; no wonder, that the hatred it engenders against all who attempt to dissolve the association, should exceed all hatred in malignity.

It is against this indulgence of the selfish propensity, that the whole tenor of the divine precepts seem to be chiefly directed. But so powerful is its influence in the heart of man, that not even the benignity of the Christian dispensation has, as yet, given a complete check to its operations. Whenever this happy period arrives, the light which has begun to dawn will shine forth in unclouded lustre. It will be shed abroad into every heart. "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim, the ears of them that hear shall hearken." "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilder-

ness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field: and the work of righteousness shall be *peace*, and the effect of righteousness *quietness* and assurance for ever!"

Under a firm conviction, that just views of the nature of the selfish principle would compel all who are capable of being influenced by religious or moral motives, to lay such a restraint upon its operations as would pave the way for the reign of peace and righteousness, I think it may be of some use to show, that, throughout every stage of the history of man, it has been the obstacle to his intellectual improvement, the destroyer of his moral feelings, and the prime source of human misery, and human degradation.

In all the fables of heathen mythology we have evidence of the efforts made by human pride to extend the idea of self, by connecting it with something that might excite more admiration than is due to aught

that is merely human. The warrior, however signalized by valour and success; the chief, however renowned for wisdom or power, rested not solely in his own merits; for no sooner did he, by the arts of war or peace, acquire dominion over the minds of his fellow-men, than he was, by imagination, endowed with a portion of supernatural agency and assistance. The pride which revolted at the idea of submitting to a common mortal, made no scruple to acknowledge the superiority of him who could boast of being descended from a divinity; and, accordingly, there were few heroes of any note in whose veins the blood of some god or goddess was not believed to flow. It is not surprising that the bards, whose business it was to make and to proclaim such discoveries, should have been so highly favoured by the great. Their inventions partook of the character of the age in which they lived; gradually improving in taste and fancy, as society advanced in knowledge and refinement.

But they were still devoted to the same purpose, that of gratifying the selfish principle, by exalting the glory of the exalted personage whom the poet found it his interest to flatter.

It is not improbable, that the characters drawn of the gods by the more ancient poets, owed many of their most striking features to the peculiarities which marked the characters of the poet's patron, and served as a delicate apology for vices too notorious to be concealed. Be that as it may, we cannot doubt the tendency of holding up to public veneration, images that could present to the mind no ideas that were not injurious to moral purity. Such were, however, the whole rabble of the heathen gods. They were nevertheless deemed the arbiters of fate. Man, conscious of his limited power over events, though he might forget, or disfigure, or debase, by his corrupt imaginations, the moral attributes of Deity, never ceased

to acknowledge the existence of a power superior to human controul. But having, in his avidity to gratify the selfish principle, been led to separate the idea of omnipotence from the idea of moral perfection, he no longer considered morality as essential towards propitiating the favour of the being whose assistance he implored. In such circumstances, he gladly had recourse to such invention as a gloomy or distempered imagination might suggest; and, when threatened by calamity, or appalled by terror, sought, by deeds of cruelty, to conciliate the dark and vengeful spirit, whose arm he believed to be lifted up in wrath against him.

Throughout the whole history of paganism we may observe, that the spirit of superstition was constantly modified by the manners of the age and people. But even these very changes afford a striking proof of the sameness of the principle in which all their various rites originated. Whether

the sacrifice was made to Moloch or to Bacchus, whether the fanatic mother doomed her infant to bleed on the altar of the infernal gods, or raised a myrtle grove in honour of the Paphian queen, she equally, by the action, endeavoured to substantiate an ideal connexion between herself, and the supernatural being who was the object of terror, or admiration, to those in whose feelings she was accustomed to sympathize. In performing the horrid rites by which the demons of cruelty were propitiated, she identified herself with all who worshipped at the infernal altar; the idea of self expanding in her mind, in exact proportion to her conception of the glory obtained by such monstrous sacrifices of every natural feeling and affection.

Nor was it the ignorant vulgar, the common herd of base and ignoble minds, that alone displayed an eagerness to obtain, by a performance of the rites of superstition, an extension of the idea of self. In the

early history of Greece and Rome, we find numerous instances of the same perverted ambition exhibited by those most famed for wisdom and valour, incontestably proving, that the propensity to magnify the idea of self, by connecting it with the idea of a superior nature, was more powerful than the force of reason, even in the minds of the most rational.

How far we might, on inquiry, see cause to ascribe the foundation of many of the different sects or schools of philosophy to the same principle, I shall not presume to say; but think it evident, that it was to this propensity of our nature, that they owed by far the greater number of their adherents. The Stoic, who gloried in viewing himself in the same light in which he supposed himself to be viewed by the gods, as an atom forming a trifling part of a stupendous whole, considered life as a game of skill, in which, however, there was such a mixture of chance, as might sometimes

render all his skill abortive. But whether the run of fortune was against him or not, he was at all events bound to keep his temper, and, when tired of his game, calmly to rise from table. It was his glory in all respects to act, *or to appear to act*, up to the doctrine he had embraced; for it was the doctrine of a sect with which he had identified himself. He therefore steeled himself against the adverse strokes of fortune; and when he found himself no more equal to the task, when fortitude and patience were about to fail, he rushed on self-destruction. On that last act he rested his hopes of fame. He cast a look to future times, and connected the idea of self with all the glory that should result to his name, from having quitted the world in a manner becoming the tenor of the sentiments he had through life defended.

The Epicureans, on the other hand, to whom pleasure and pain were the sole objects of desire and aversion, bent their en-

deavours to discover, by what course of conduct pain could be most effectually avoided, and pleasure with greatest certainty obtained. The result of their inquiries seems to have been, that a cold and selfish prudence was essential towards the attainment of the *maximum* of human happiness. Virtue had for them no beauty, but as it had a tendency to produce ease of mind, respect, esteem, and admiration. Vice, in their eyes, had no deformity, but as it was productive of uneasiness or pain. The principles of this sect might so easily be modified to the inclinations of him who adopted them, that it is not surprising they should, in process of time, have become extremely popular; nor that the moderation which the founders of the sect so strenuously recommended, should have degenerated into complete indifference with regard to all events that had no immediate operation in promoting or destroying the happiness of the individual. The Epicurean gloried in his selfishness; and though prevent-

ed, by the very principles he assumed, from resenting an attack on those principles; when his happiness, or the gratifications in which he placed his happiness, were concerned, he was not bound to lay any restraint on his vindictive passions.

If the difference of opinion among the different sects did not disturb the public harmony; if the Stoic and Epicurean were content that each should have the glory of acting up to the doctrines he had embraced, without imposing his peculiar tenets as a rule of action on others, we may conclude, that in this very circumstance of apparent moderation, they each considered a portion of their glory to be comprised. The tenets of his sect was, to each, an idol, which he was bound to worship. He not only adorned its shrine by all the efforts of his wisdom and genius, but he deemed his honour, his fame, his glory, to be all implicated in evincing the sincerity of his devotion. He sought to enlarge the idea of self, not by

pulling down other idols, but by exalting his own; and did not so much desire to increase the number of its votaries, as to obtain for himself the glory resulting from a certain line of conduct. The opinions of his school were worshipped by him, in the very same spirit that the images of Jupiter or Minerva were worshipped by the people. It was their connexion with the idea of self, that gave to the objects, in both cases, a peculiar interest.

As none of the systems were calculated to afford comfort to the heart, or satisfaction to the understanding, the attachment to them, independent of the ties of pride, must have been of a slight texture. Even to those by whom the existence of a Supreme Ruler of the universe was most strongly inculcated, the god of whom they spoke was not an object of faith. His righteousness was a deduction made by reason, from certain premises, which few had it in their power to investigate, and which still fewer had capacity to compre-

hend. But by this very circumstance the value of the discovery was enhanced, as affording to a few studious and highly cultivated minds a flattering proof of their own superior wisdom. The notions they attained to on the subject, were just sufficient to gratify their pride, but produced no correspondent effect upon their conduct.*

The very small effect produced by the sublime notions of Deity incidentally dis-

* This striking incongruity is exposed, in terms of keen reproach, by St Paul. He, in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, acknowledges, that they had some knowledge of the divine attributes, and that, from the study of nature, they had derived just notions, not only of the power, but of the moral nature of the Deity: Yet that, notwithstanding these notions of God, they adhered to and cherished the most absurd superstitions. And while they professed to believe in the righteousness of the Supreme Being, disgraced their belief in this truth by unrighteousness; and, knowing that the judgment of God awaited vice, not only gave free indulgence to their own vicious propensities, but applauded in others the same line of conduct.

played in the writings of some Heathen philosophers, is in no circumstance more clearly demonstrated, than in the sentiments expressed by the most enlightened men, of the most enlightened period, on the subject of the Jewish worship.

Was it not natural to expect, that men, whose minds had been familiar with exalted conceptions of a Supreme Creator and Governor of all things, should have applauded, as consonant to reason, the worship of the divine essence? Was it not natural to expect, that however the vulgar might be affected by the novelty, the philosophical theists, of every denomination, would have rejoiced to find, that there was in the world one temple dedicated to the true and invisible God? So far, however, were the most enlightened Romans from evincing any such sentiments of approbation, that the want of images in the Jewish temple was reprobated by them, in the very same terms, and on the very same

grounds, that it was reprobated by the vulgar. Nor were the Jews exposed only to reproaches on account of their religion, but to the most bitter and cruel persecution.

It is acknowledged by the apologists of the Pagans, that both Jews and Christians were held in abhorrence; and this abhorrence is justified on a plea which merits our particular notice. What is the plea in this instance set up in justification of intolerance? It is, that the religion of the Jews and Christians was of *an unsociable nature*,* and did not coalesce with the more cheerful and *amiable* superstitions of the Heathens. Have we not, in the terms of this apology, the most satisfactory proof, that the whole fabric of Pagan superstition was founded in, and supported by the selfish principle? The ideas of God, given by revelation, however agreeable to natural re-

* See GIBBON.

ligion, however consistent with all that the pretended advocates of natural religion professed to believe concerning Providence and the nature of the divine Being, presented not to the mind any object that could be appropriated, or exclusively connected, with the idea of self.

The religion of the Jews was, indeed, so far unsocial, as it circumscribed the privilege of performing certain rites within the pale of that nation to whom the performance of them had been specially commanded; and which were by them to be performed, in commemoration of a promise thereafter to be fulfilled. But their religion, as far as the knowledge and worship of God were concerned, was not unsocial. Their notions of Deity, of the worship due to a Being infinite in all perfection, were communicable and communicated to individuals of all nations. But they refused to bow the knee to the images which the philosophers of Greece and Rome did not

scruple to acknowledge as objects worthy their devotions. They refused to join in the ceremonies of a superstition, endeared to the people, not only on account of its being associated with the social and domestic pleasures, but on account of its being associated with the indulgence of every selfish propensity, and every sensual appetite; and though they pled, in justification of their refusal, the command of an invisible Being, such as the philosophers had, in their writings, described the Governor of the universe to be, the plea was rejected with scorn, and their faith imputed to them as a crime!

By what circumstance, in the conduct of the Jews, were the vindictive passions in the breasts of their conquerors set on fire? The prejudices of the vulgar might easily be excited against a people whose mode of worship differed from that to which they had been accustomed, and who denied to their pride the gratification it was

wont to receive, from beholding the idols of strangers rendered vassals to the gods of Rome. But, by the enlightened, the vulgar worship, and the objects of it, were held in secret contempt. They believed not any of the fables in which all their superstitious rites and ceremonies were founded. But it was in holding opinions superior to the vulgar, that they gloried. It was in this proof of intellectual superiority, that they rested their pretensions. It was their pride, their boast, that by which the idea of self was enlarged; and, consequently, however nearly the abstract notions of Deity cherished by the Jews, might approach to those they cherished, as the Jews were not of their school, the similarity, as far as it existed, was rather calculated to awaken jealousy than to afford gratification.

On the first preaching of Christianity, the same cause operated still more forcibly; the jealousy and hatred of the enlightened,

as well as of the despised vulgar, seeming to increase in proportion as the moral excellency of the doctrines preached became more undeniably apparent. Was this rancour consistent with the professions they made of their regard to virtue? Yes. For that regard was merely speculative; and with the speculations concerning it, all who embraced the tenets of the particular school in which they were taught, connected the idea of self. Pride was bound to maintain the connexion; Christianity threatened to dissolve it; and the vindictive passions were consequently roused to vengeance.

CHAPTER IX.

Operation of the propensity to enlarge the idea of self exhibited in the conduct of the Heathen philosophers: In the disobedience of the Jews: In the conduct of the Pharisees, &c. Tendency of divine revelation to counteract this propensity illustrated.

THE profound and universal admiration, which the genius and wisdom of the enlightened part of the ancient Pagan world continues to exact, renders eulogium superfluous. It is acknowledged on all hands, that we have, in the memorials they have left, very satisfactory evidence, of their having cultivated the powers of intellect as far, and with as much success, as we can conceive possible.

Could man "by searching find out God," they undoubtedly would have "discovered the Almighty to perfection." But their researches were in vain; for the glimmering of light which it struck out, was too feeble to reach the heart. What they had, by the exertion of the intellectual powers, discovered, became necessarily connected with the idea of self, which expanded in proportion to the celebrity which their doctrine obtained. Being purchased by mental labour, it was the property of him who had paid the price; and, consequently, however sublime, however just or excellent, some of the notions that were mingled with the tenets taught in the several schools of philosophy might be, it was pride, one of the modifications of the selfish principle, that was chiefly interested in their defence. With the opinions he had embraced, with the school with which he was connected, ideas of self were connected; nor was it ever supposed or imagined, that the pride which was in this way

cherished, was inimical to virtue, or offensive to the gods.

This forms a very remarkable difference between the notions of Deity, communicated by divine revelation, and those elicited from a contemplation of the works of creation and providence, by human reason.

God revealed himself to the Hebrews as the God of holiness, "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," infinite in all perfection, omnipotent, omniscient, and immutable. These attributes of Deity could not be to them a matter of doubtful speculation, for they were revealed in a manner to enforce conviction; neither could the knowledge of them excite pride, for it was not in consequence of *their* worth, but in compassion to their wretchedness, and in fulfilment of the promise made to their fathers, that God, in this miraculous manner, revealed himself to them. That pride might have no cause to triumph in the

favour thus shown to their nation, that favour was, in express declaration, limited to the term of their obedience. Though God vouchsafed, through the ministration of Moses, to give them laws and ordinances, all these laws and ordinances were so framed as to check the operation of the selfish principle, for with none of them could the idea of self be possibly connected. Their law itself, though revealed from heaven, was declared to be only preparatory to the promulgation of a law more perfect; and the rites and ceremonies which it enjoined, to be only obligatory till the purpose for which they were instituted should have been fulfilled.

Though the Lord God was declared to them as merciful and gracious, they were not to think themselves worthy of approaching him, till their sins had been expiated by certain offerings; nor were they to place confidence in these expiations as a means of acceptance, unless accompanied

by repentance, and resolved purpose of amendment.

The more completely this subject is investigated, the more clearly will it be established, that the religion given by Moses had that peculiar mark of authenticity in which all pretended revelations are deficient, *it tended to lay an effectual restraint upon the selfish principle.*

It was for this very reason that its yoke was felt intolerable. Its ceremonies were not more tiresome or more grievous to indolence, than the ceremonies of Pagan worship. Its rites were far more pure, far less repugnant to reason and to humanity, than the rites of idolatry. But with the superstitious ceremonies of Pagan worship pride could coalesce, and with its most cruel rites the idea of self could be connected. In performing them, vanity might be gratified by the idea of obtaining glory or distinction; and hence, perhaps, the ex-

traordinary charm they seemed to have in the eyes of the Jewish matrons, who, while they felt the Sabbath a grievance, thought it no grievance to make their children pass through the fire to Moloch! With the Sabbath, ideas of the power of the Creator, of the relation in which they stood to him, and of the obligation they had come under to obey his laws, were inseparably connected. Had it been instituted in commemoration of some famous deed performed by their ancestors, they might, in the gratification of it, have contrived to gratify national pride. But it was to be a day of rest; and, in the repose that was enjoined, they were forcibly reminded of the common origin of the human race; of the attention due to the poor as brethren; and of the humanity which they were commanded to exercise towards the lower orders of creation.

There was, in all this, nothing by which the idea of self could possibly be exalted

or enlarged. There was, on the contrary, much that tended to restrain and diminish the operation of the selfish principle. It therefore became irksome. The check which it gave to the most powerful propensity of our nature was felt to be intolerable, and gladly did the Israelites embrace every form of superstition which offered to free them from the restraints which it imposed. The neighbouring nations had made for themselves a religion, more propitious to the secret desires of the heart. Their gods were approachable at all times, and though represented as objects of terror to the imagination, and to be propitiated by rites either painful to the body or shocking to the mind, they required not from their votaries either purity or holiness. Their rites might be performed, though the heart boiled with rancour and malevolence; and the heart that thus performed them, might at the same time rejoice in the idea of an augmentation of its glory.

Throughout the whole of the Old Testament, the selfish principle, as I have endeavoured to describe it, is clearly stated as operating in the hearts of those who forsook the God of their fathers, to serve other gods. The idolaters formed a party, and each of the members, identifying himself with the whole, connected the idea of self with all the strength, power, riches, and glory of the aggregate.

Those who remained faithful to the religion revealed from heaven, could not possibly enjoy a similar gratification. They might indeed rejoice in God, and put their confidence in his mercies: They might triumph in the hope of being made partakers of his promises, and delight in the consciousness of having entitled themselves to this reward, by their unshaken faith and strict obedience. But all this they must do individually. Their acceptance was still a matter of favour. The object of their worship being infinitely exalted above

all with which the idea of self could be connected, the contemplation of his perfections must necessarily have excited emotions of veneration, accompanied by such a consciousness of their own comparative unworthiness, as must have tended to produce humility.

In all that was revealed to our fathers by the prophets, love to God was represented as connected with good-will to man; nor was piety ever exhibited as separable from benevolence. Without a total change in the nature of the human mind, the contemplation of infinite perfection, and of that dependence on the mercies of the Most High, in which all are without exception placed, must tend to excite emotions, and to exercise affections of the nature here described. But though the worship of God, and faith in all that he has revealed, and obedience to all that he has commanded, is certainly and unavoidably productive of humility, and charity, and mercy; the wor-

ship of created things, be they objects of our external or internal senses, be they the workmanship of men's hands or of men's imaginations, has no such tendency. For as, with the idol of his imagination, the worshipper identifies himself, in exalting it the idea of self is exalted; in honouring it, the idea of self is enlarged; and it is in the nature of things impossible, that this gratification should be productive of humility or benevolence.

It is in the frantic excesses of superstition, that the nature and tendency of the propensity to enlarge the idea of self is exhibited in the strongest colours; and if, in beholding these, we keep it in mind, that we only behold the operation of a principle which more or less operates in every heart, the spectacle will be highly instructive. Former times have passed away, nor need we go back to these for examples; since it is proved, that in our own day, even in the present hour, and within the limits of

the British empire, the abhorred rites of Moloch are performed to as great an extent, and with circumstances marking depravity as atrocious, as at any former period!

To "Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood of human sacrifice,"* the idol of the temple of Juggernaut does not yield the palm, either in respect to the number or devotion of his infatuated worshippers. It is proved by incontestible evidence,† that men and women,—beings endowed with the glorious powers of reason, susceptible of all the emotions of sympathy, and all the affections of benevolence, crowd by thousands, and hundreds of thousands, to behold the polluted image which has for ages been the object of adoration, and to glut their eyes with the spectacle of the

* MILTON.

† See Christian Researches in Asia, by the Rev. CLAUDIUS BUCHANAN.

human victims who have the glory of being crushed to death beneath his chariot wheels! At every turn of this dread instrument of slaughter, the shout of joy is raised! And such is the enthusiasm excited by the yell of triumph, that numbers who came to the place without any intention of offering themselves as sacrifices to this infernal deity, rush to the spot where instant death awaits them, that, as voluntary victims, they may augment the glory of the day!

When we consider the numbers of lives that are thus annually sacrificed, and that the sacrifice is for the most part voluntary, we are filled with horror and astonishment. But we are, at the same time, very apt to ascribe this dereliction of reason to some natural defect in the intellectual powers of the persons thus infatuated; and, comforting ourselves by the assurance that the defect is irremediable, and that they are thus, in the order of Providence, our infe-

riors, we hastily dismiss the subject from our minds.

Let us, however, contemplate this revolting picture in another point of view, and we shall behold in it the effects resulting from the excessive and uncontrolled operation of the same propensity which impels us to identify ourselves with the enlightened part of our species, and to look down on the unenlightened as beings of an inferior nature. The Hindoo, taught from infancy to consider himself as of a separate creation, distinguished by the favour of the gods from every other race, identifies himself, and his cast, and the whole of the Hindoo people, with the tutelar deities of his nation. Of these monsters, which have been, by the gross conceptions of ignorance and fanaticism, exalted into the rank of divinities, it has always happened, that some have occasionally risen to a pre-eminence in popularity. The worshippers of the popular idol form a party, glorying in

its numbers and its strength. With every member of the party the idea of self is connected in every individual breast; the idol which forms the bond of union being equally the glory of the whole. The greater the distance from the local divinity, the farther does the idea of self extend; and thus the gratification afforded to the selfish principle is multiplied by arithmetical progression, according to the length of the pilgrimage. By the sight of the innumerable multitudes who press forward to the shrine, his enthusiasm is inflamed to madness. Burning for the glory of being identified in the minds of the countless host, with the object of their adoration, he rushes on destruction, and enjoys in idea all the felicity of an extended existence, in the applause of the spectators.

In all this, we only behold the excess to which the propensity to magnify the idea of self may operate, where neither con-

trolled by reason, nor counteracted by principles of divine authority. In every institution of paganism, we perceive the fuel by which the flame is fed. These universally tend to gratify that propensity, which all the institutions originating in divine wisdom tend to counteract and mortify.

As it has become the fashion to neglect or depreciate the instruction conveyed in the Old Testament, some proofs of this may not be deemed superfluous. Let us then observe, that when the Jews were permitted to build a temple to the Most High, they were solemnly enjoined to consider it as no other than a memorial of the omniscience and omnipresence of the supreme Being, whose mercy they were there to invoke, whose forgiveness they were there to supplicate; and thus, in every act of devotion, to be reminded of their own sins and frailties, and of the infinite holiness and purity of the invisible, but ever-

present God. In attentively perusing the account handed down to us of the dedication of this house of prayer,* we shall perceive, that no extension of the idea of self could possibly have been in the contemplation of its founder, at the moment he exclaimed, "But will God in very deed dwell with men! Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built!" Neither could any gratification of his selfish principle result from the views subsequently given of the necessity which all experienced of pardon and protection.

It is in these very circumstances, which evidently tended to counteract the operation of the selfish principle, that we behold the cause of that dereliction of their faith, and that proneness to forsake the worship of their God, for which the Israelites were for some ages so remarkable. Let us now

* 1 Kings, chap. 8. and 2 Chron. chap. 6.

see in what manner they afterwards contrived to reconcile themselves to the divine institutions.

Having, by their disobedience to the divine laws, brought upon themselves all the evils explicitly foretold by the inspired prophets, they were fearfully convinced of their being under the divine government. They, therefore, after their return from captivity, no longer refused to acknowledge the divine authority. But, alas! punishment did not purify their hearts, though it certainly had a powerful influence on their conduct. The same propensity by which they had formerly been impelled to forsake the God of their fathers, still manifestly operated in their hearts; and by its activity led them to discover a method whereby it might be gratified, without appearing to deny their faith.

After their return from captivity, they no longer made to themselves idols of wood

or stone, or any precious metal, but out of the very forms of their religion—out of the very ordinances and laws acknowledged to be of divine authority—they contrived to fabricate idols, of which each man made choice according to his inclination, and with which, having once acknowledged it, he so completely connected the idea of self, that his pride was gratified in proportion to the honour it received.

As the surest means of gratifying ambition, each sect represented itself as the chosen favourite of heaven, and its peculiar tenets as of more importance than the whole of the law and the prophets.

While the spirit of piety springing from heart-felt acknowledgment of the divine attributes was thus banished, the devotion by which it was superseded became apparently more strict, and (at least in some of the sects,) the punctilious observance of

the forms and rules prescribed, more rigidly adhered to.

The ceremonies enjoined by the law, which had in former times been deemed oppressive, were now found insufficient to satisfy the zeal of holy persons; to the law, therefore, additions were made. The Sabbath, appointed as a day of rest, a day dedicated to a thankful remembrance of the mercies of God, and to correspondent acts of humanity and mercy, had, by the worshippers of Moloch, been neglected; but though the observance of it was now restored, it was no longer rendered conducive to the support of the spirit of gratitude and benevolence. It was converted into an instrument of war, wielded with great effect by the reigning sects, who modelled the institution after the imagination of their own hearts.

It is easy to ascribe these proceedings of the Jewish sects, to the spirit of fanati-

cism. But what is the spirit of fanaticism? Is it any other than the selfish principle operating through the medium of a distempered fancy? A Pharisee could not swell or enlarge the idea of self, by that species of obedience to the divine law which that law had commanded: but with every addition which he made to it, he could connect the idea of self; with every peculiar doctrine which he conceived, or embraced, or propagated, or defended, he could not only connect the idea of self, but, by the connexion which his opinions had with the divine precepts on which they had been ingrafted, he could extend the idea of *self* until it reached Omnipotence.

We are shocked at such presumption. But let us not hastily pronounce it to have been but rarely practised; or that the persons guilty of it, were sinners beyond all that now dwell upon the earth. Let us rather pursue the investigation, and in-

quire, what effects this new species of idolatry produced upon the mind?

The persons who took upon them to stamp the mere deductions of human reason, or the mere fabrications of human imagination, with the signet of God, from that moment became to themselves as gods. If the doctrine thus promulged was received by numbers, the idea of its omnipotence was strengthened in the augmented strength of the party. If it was opposed or controverted, those who opposed its reception, or denied its truth, or even ventured to doubt of its infallibility, were accused of impiety, of blasphemy, and rebellion against God. Having once exalted their opinions, the crude notions of their own gloomy or distempered fancies, into an equality with divine revelation, pride and self-love were equally engaged to prevent others from making any distinction between them. Any attempt to examine the validity of the connexion, was consequently resented

with the utmost vehemence; and, as far as the power of the party extended, punished with unrelenting severity.

The zeal of the Pharisees did not fall short of the zeal of the prophets; but as the fruits were obviously different, we may safely infer that the principle which produced them was also different.

The zeal evinced by the ancient prophets, and which was produced by faith, or confidence, in the wisdom, power, goodness, and truth of the supreme Being, was ardently bent on working in the hearts of others, that reformation which might restore them to the divine favour.

Zeal produced by attachment to the particular opinions or doctrines of that sect with which the individual had identified himself, was ardently bent on extending the dominion of that sect over the minds of his fellow-creatures.

The fruits of that zeal which rejoices in the successful propagation of its own peculiar notions, are laid open to our inspection in the conduct of the Pharisees; and are certainly in their nature very opposite to that which has been described above. It directed not the attention to general principles, nor even permitted the application of them; but kept the attention fixed on those particular objects, which it was the glory of the sect to exalt and magnify. So that it secured converts to its peculiar doctrines, it cared not though the precepts of the law were rendered void; and those whom it could not convert, it reviled and persecuted.

The Pharisees, while they thus walked after the corrupt desires of their own hearts, and zealously contended for a strict observance of the rules and statutes prescribed by no higher authority than that of human wisdom, nevertheless pretended that they, *and they only*, walked after the command-

ments of God; and by means of the connexion which their own imaginations had formed, between their vain traditions and the declared will of God, they very probably deceived themselves into an actual persuasion, that in their zeal for those traditions, they were actuated by motives purely religious.

Of the opposing sect of the Sadducees less is said in Scripture, and I know not that the accounts given of it elsewhere are to be relied upon: But though, concerning the peculiar doctrines of this sect, we have but scanty information, from the instances given of their conduct we may infer, that however they differed in opinion from the Pharisees, with respect to certain points of faith, they were wedded to their opinions by the same bond which tied the Pharisees to theirs. Their non-belief concerning a future state, and the existence of spiritual natures, made just as good an idol, and one as well qualified to gratify the pro-

pensity of which we treat, as any of the notions of the Pharisees. In this idol of their imaginations they could not only glory, but probably fancied they had a particular right to glory, as in forming it they must have taken some pains to conquer the prejudices of their education; and as they connected the idea of self with doctrines incapable of being demonstrated or refuted, their success in cavil was to them equivalent to the triumph of victory.

But though the Sadducees had acquired a name, with the idea attached to which each member could connect the idea of self, and thus become identified with the whole party, the Sadducees were not in power; and, consequently, were not entitled to persecute. And as the tenets which they embraced did not immediately interfere with the superstitious observances which were the idols of the Pharisees, they were permitted to enjoy the glory of main-

taining them, without much opposition from the other party.

Such was the state of religion among the Jews, when the Saviour of the world appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The repentance preached by John was a dereliction of the selfish principle; but it was preached in vain to those who had fortified themselves in its strongholds; they, consequently, were not prepared to receive the truth. The truth preached by Jesus Christ was to them particularly offensive, as it threatened to subvert the dominion in which they gloried; to destroy the idols to which they had attached their hearts; and to lessen the idea of self in the mind of every individual, by lessening the strength and glory of the party with which that idea was connected.

The more minutely we investigate the doctrines of our Saviour, the more thoroughly shall we be convinced, that in this

respect "he spake as never man spake;" all that he said having a direct tendency to counteract the operation of the selfish principle. He did not, as the Stoics had formerly done, endeavour to render every individual mind separate and independent, (thus condensing, as it were, the force of pride in the individual bosom,) but he proposed *himself* as the object with which the mind might connect the idea of self without sin or danger; the immediate fruits of this connexion being increased love to God, and increased love to man; or, in other words, an increase of all the pious and benevolent affections.

The doctrines of our Saviour were so far from having any tendency to obstruct or impoison any of the legitimate sources of human happiness, that they gave no countenance to those who sought to obtain a character for righteousness, by the rigid scrupulosity with which they abstained from all the innocent and social pleasures.

The conduct of such persons was, by our Saviour, traced to its proper source,—a desire to promote their own glory, under pretence of promoting the glory of God: and of all the vices and follies of mankind, it is to be remarked, that this is the only one of which the Saviour of the world spoke in terms of severity. By his doctrines, the chains by which the selfish principle bound the things of this world to the heart, were broken; but they diminished not the force of any of its natural ties. By purifying the affections of the heart, they increased their influence; and, by imposing a restraint on the propensity which renders the exertion of all the faculties of the human mind abortive, by making them subservient to its gratification, they enhanced the value of all the intellectual powers which God, in his wisdom, had bestowed on man. While they exhibited the objects of human glory, stripped of their undue colouring, they opened to the mind of man more glorious views. Withdrawing the

dark veil with which sin had covered the promise of immortality, they presented to him the prospect of eternal life; at the same time declaring the immortality now promised, to be no inherent principle of his nature, but the gift of God through Jesus Christ: Not placed within the reach of man by the exertions of his own might, nor to be attained by any mode of thinking or of acting suggested by the vain imaginations of his own heart, nor by any thing whereby he could *magnify himself;* but by faith in the power of him who had promised, evinced by sincere and unqualified obedience.

Thus we see the propensity to enlarge the idea of self effectually combated by the doctrines of the gospel; for as the commandments were resolved by our Saviour into the simple elements of piety and benevolence, obedience to them implied a complete transference of the affections from objects in which the selfish propensity seeks

its gratification, to objects that are in their nature totally and essentially different.

The Scribes and Pharisees, who pretended great zeal for the law of Moses, acknowledged the propriety of our Saviour's precept concerning the love of God; the love of God being one of the primary injunctions of the law. But in the love of God they included the love of their own theories and explanations. These they held up as the objects of reverence and of worship: These they loved with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and such of their neighbours as united with them in opinion, they likewise loved; for with all who worshipped the same idol, the idea of self was inseparably connected. But to this narrow circle their benevolence was confined; for all who were not within this pale, however pure their love to God, or however meritorious their conduct to man, in refusing homage to their peculiar doctrines, had become worthy of reproba-

tion in their eyes, and consequently were objects of their implacable hatred and resentment.

In this spirit, they ascribed to infernal agency the miracles wrought by Christ in proof of his divine mission; nor did the benevolence, by which all these acts of supernatural power were stamped, seem worthy of their attention. The heavenly wisdom which shone forth in his doctrines, and the benignity, purity, and meekness, which adorned his life and manners, were to them equally offensive; for, trying all his words and actions by no other rule than that of conformity to their peculiar notions, and of obedience to all the precepts and injunctions which they had added to the law, and with which they identified themselves, they were by this rule of judgment compelled to hate and to oppose him.

The fierceness of their opposition proved that it originated, not merely in the preju-

dices of education; for though early prejudice, by associating the idea of good with what is in its nature evil, and the idea of evil with what is in its nature good, must undoubtedly operate against the reception of truth, such prejudices are not productive of active malignity. It is only when the objects with which we connect ideas of good, are by some means connected with ideas of *self*, that the selfish and malignant passions become interested in their defence: and this was evidently the case with regard to the Scribes and Pharisees, who identified themselves, not with the principles of true religion, as they had been revealed in the law and by the prophets, but with certain explanations of these, forming a set of peculiar notions and tenets, which served to distinguish them as a party.

The selfish principle, which had, in its first operation, brought sin and sorrow into the world, was permitted, in party-spirit,

to display its full deformity, and by party-spirit to achieve its consummation, in persecuting to the death the Son of God! As far as the mere prejudices of education could operate, they operated on the whole Jewish nation. But when no selfish considerations strengthened them, they melted before the light of truth, and proved too feeble to resist its powerful influence. Still, however, the prejudices of education continued in some degree to operate even upon the minds of the disciples; nor have we reason to suppose that they, more than others, were entirely exempt from that evil principle, which is the source and fountain of all corruption; but have indeed strong evidence to the contrary, in the contentions which took place among them, concerning the rank which they expected to hold in the Messiah's kingdom, and their desire that he should gratify their resentment, by calling down fire from heaven to destroy the inhabitants of the inhospitable village which had refused to receive them.

On this, and other occasions, they evinced their liability to prejudice and passion, and all the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature. Nor was it until the promise made by our Saviour was fulfilled, in the coming of the Holy Ghost, that we observe any great or remarkable change to have taken place in their hearts.

The miracles which they were then, by divine aid, enabled to perform, appeared to all who were eye-witnesses of the events, demonstrative proof of their divine mission. It was a proof addressed to the understanding, through the medium of the senses; and was consequently calculated to produce immediate conviction on the minds of the beholders, and to become the object of anxious inquiry and investigation, to those who, from the publicity of the transactions, had it in their power to compare and to examine the evidence on which it rested. But had the power of the Most High been only manifested to the senses—had it been

only exhibited in the controul or alteration of the known laws of nature, as they operate in the diseases of the human frame; time and distance, by precluding from all means of information concerning the truth of the facts asserted, would by degrees have rendered them less and less credible. It therefore was necessary, that the divine mission of the apostles should be attested by an evidence, whose testimony distance could not invalidate, nor time destroy. And such an evidence we have in the proofs handed down to us in the writings of the apostles, of the miraculous extinction of the selfish principle in their breasts. The sudden change which took place in the frame and temper of their minds, was a miracle which nothing short of divine power could effect, and to divine power it must consequently be ascribed.

In the simple narrative given of their proceedings in the Acts of the Apostles, and even in the Epistles addressed to the

early converts, we may find instances of national prejudice, and of errors in judgment, sufficient to prove, that the change which was wrought in their hearts produced no supernatural effects on their intellectual powers. It only prevented the abuse of these powers, and impelled the will to exercise them, not for the glory of the individual, but for the good of mankind. It prevented not one alone, but all of the inspired writers, from setting up his own peculiar opinions as an idol; but it did not prevent each of them from forming his own notions concerning the probable meaning of mysteries, of which no explicit explanation had been given by revelation from on high.

Nor did this forbearance arise from any party considerations; for by no such unhallowed bonds were these first Christians united. It originated in a higher principle. They "sought not the praise of man, but of God." They looked not to each other

for support, but "to the Author and Finisher of their faith;" and resting in full assurance on the divine wisdom of their Instructor, they carefully discriminated between those doctrines which they were called by him to preach, and the notions or opinions which originated in their own minds. Consequently, no instance of zeal for their own peculiar explanations of the sacred mysteries is to be discovered; far less any symptom of wrath or indignation against those, who, with regard to such things, entertained opinions that did not exactly correspond with theirs; for from all the passions connected with the selfish principle, they were completely and entirely set free. This freedom they ascribe, not to their own strength, nor to their own might, nor to the power of their own understandings, but, with all humility, acknowledged that it was "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Differing as they did from each other, in temper, manners, and education, they, with

the same simplicity and singleness of heart, preached the gospel that had been delivered to their ministration; and by keeping its principles steadily in view, they, without intention, exhibited such wonderful unity of sentiment, as, considering the variety of their dispositions and circumstances, appears truly astonishing. The doctrines which they inculcated from divine authority, were indeed few and simple; but, being of infinite moment, they were, by that very circumstance, calculated to make a more immediate, as well as a more deep impression. The effects of that impression, wherever it was made, was displayed in the lives of individuals, by the subjection of the sensual appetites, and the controul of the selfish principle.

It was thus that the power of the Holy Ghost was manifested. But by the spirit of prophecy it was declared, that these manifestations of its influence should not long be exhibited; " that perilous times

should come, when men should again be lovers of themselves;" again come under the dominion of that selfish propensity, whose operations had, on the first preaching of the gospel, been for a time miraculously restrained. How completely this prophecy was fulfilled, no one, in the least acquainted with the history of the church, can be at any loss to determine.*

* The melancholy consequences that were to ensue from the returning influences of the selfish principle, are particularly described by St Paul in the second chapter of his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in the third and fourth chapters of his Second Epistle to Timothy, and also in the fourth chapter of his First Epistle to the same person. The second chapter of the Second Epistle General of Peter, may also be referred to, as containing a lively representation of the operations of that propensity to enlarge the idea of self, which is there exhibited as corrupting the heart by vanity, &c.

CHAPTER X.

Effects produced by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Effects of the selfish principle, in corrupting the purity of religious faith: In producing bigotry and intolerance. Conclusion.

AMONG the many attempts made by Mr Gibbon to depreciate the evidences of Christianity, he has, if I rightly remember, spoken of the extreme difficulty of ascertaining the exact period from which the pretensions to divine inspiration are no longer to be admitted as valid. By the view which I have taken of the subject, his objections are rendered nugatory. For if it was by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, upon the hearts of the apostles, that the selfish propensity had been annihilated, the re-appearance of that propensity in the

teachers of Christianity, affords a precise data, from which we may safely reckon, that the supernatural gifts bestowed on the church of Christ at the commencement of its formation, were withdrawn. All the information we can now obtain concerning the early ages of the church, bears us out in this conclusion; and I make no doubt, that those who are best informed upon the subject will recollect a number of facts sufficient to prove, that the recommencement of the operation of the selfish principle in the teachers of Christianity, was the period at which the power of working miracles ceased.*

The fathers of the church, with whom this change originated, were no less tho-

* It is far from the author's intention to insinuate, that the influences of divine grace upon the heart were confined to the period of its extraordinary and miraculous operations; though, from that period, they ceased to be distinguishable from the suggestions of conscience.

roughly convinced of the truths of the gospel than the apostles; nor were they less zealous in propagating the doctrines of salvation: but, no longer content with preaching, in simplicity, the doctrines that had been revealed, they gradually mingled with them the fruits of their own cogitations, and gave to these explanations an importance which belonged only to the truths that had been revealed from heaven. Still, however, it was to those truths that they chiefly directed the attention. They had drank too deeply of the Christian spirit, to prefer their own glory to the glory of God, and the everlasting welfare of their fellow-creatures. The example set before them was still kept steadily in view. Their faith was still pure and paramount; and though, in their zeal, they gave proofs of human infirmity, they, by the tenor of their lives, evinced the purity of their motives, and the integrity of their principles.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that however pure their faith, however just their principles, they, in so far as they placed any of their own peculiar notions upon a par with divine truths, showed themselves actuated by a desire of enlarging the idea of self.

As time advanced, the operation of this propensity became more and more apparent. The influence which those who governed the church had obtained over the minds of the converted, gave authority to whatever rules they chose to prescribe, and to whatever opinions they chose to dictate. By the persecutions to which they were exposed on account of their religion, and by the dauntless fortitude, and unconquerable patience, with which they endured the cruel sufferings inflicted by their persecutors, they procured for themselves a respect little short of adoration. When death had sealed their testimony, every opinion they had avowed, every notion they had em-

braced, was remembered and repeated, not as the conclusions of fallible reason, but as divine and infallible truths.*

But as all speculative points may be viewed in various lights; and as all mysteries beyond the reach of human reason, can only be rendered clear by supernatural light, it was impossible, that, while such supernatural light was withheld, the judgments formed on such subjects should not widely and essentially differ.

We accordingly find, that at an early period the opinions thus brought forward became objects of controversy, and were canvassed, censured, and condemned, by those who embraced opposite opinions, not merely on account of the incompetency of human reason, *but because they did not agree with the notions embraced by their*

* For an illustration of these remarks, the reader is referred to MOSHEIM's Ecclesiastical History.

equally fallible opponents. It was thus that the early heresies were engendered.

Whoever had, by his talents or activity, or apparent zeal for truth, contrived to acquire influence, considered himself at liberty to employ that influence in support of his own peculiar notions. Whoever desired, like the builders of Babel, to get to himself a name, singled out some portion of the gospel doctrine to expound, and model, and fashion after his own fancy; and having exalted this production of his own mind into an object of faith, strenuously contended that it ought to be received by others as of divine origin. If he succeeded, he had the glory of being the founder of a sect, with which he could identify himself. The pride and ambition inseparable from the selfish principle were gratified in exact proportion to his success. All the human beings to whom he had the power of dictating, became in a manner his own property. He was great in their great-

ness, and strong in their strength, and multiplied in their numbers. All who rejected his doctrine, in attempting to check this enlargement of the idea of self, became objects of hatred and resentment. If power was on his side, the opposers of his doctrine were branded with the name of heretics; his enemies were called the enemies of God; his adversaries, the adversaries of truth; and those who denied the justice of his explanations, were termed infidels!

That this bitterness, manifested by the partisans of particular sects against their opponents, was the offspring of the selfish principle, will appear incontrovertible, when we consider, that to reject the evidences of revelation, or even to deny the existence of the supreme Being, produced in the minds of believers no other feelings than those of sorrow, and regret, and compassion, for the unhappy persons who were in this state of darkness; and that wrath, hatred, and revenge, were never called forth but

in defence of some peculiar tenet, with which every individual of the sect or party connected the idea of self. Neither with the supreme Being, nor with ought that has been revealed by him, could this species of connexion be formed. While these were steadily kept in view, the doctrines of salvation were propagated with zeal; but it was a zeal begotten, accompanied, and followed, by the purest benevolence. When the deductions of human reason were mingled with, or substituted for divine truths, these notions and inventions were propagated with a zeal no less fervent; but it was a zeal of a different complexion, and to which all the selfish and malignant passions were subservient.

It was not, however, until put in possession of temporal power and authority, that the species of idol worship, early introduced into the Christian church, could obtain any permanent establishment. It was not till then, that any individual, or body of

men, could hope without dispute to enjoy the peculiar privilege of affixing to their interpretation of the word of God, the signet of omnipotence. The seal, it is true, was forged; but while those who used it were backed by the power of the Roman empire, who dared to dispute the validity of the instrument?

In the glory of the church, all its immediate members deemed their own glory to be implicated. Every victory which it obtained over its adversaries, was an enlargement of the idea of self to every individual mind. By the success of every new dogma dictated by the authority of the church, the same species of triumph was experienced; and as the propensity in which all these attempts to obtain for human inventions the reverence and worship due alone to infinite wisdom, is in its nature insatiable, we cannot wonder at the rapidity with which these inventions multiplied; nor, considering their origin, need

we be surprised, that in zeal for these inventions, zeal for the doctrines of the gospel should merge, and in process of time be completely swallowed up.

The church thenceforth usurped the place, and assumed the prerogative of Deity. Every member of it, from the pontiff to the meanest underling of the priesthood, so far identified himself with the church, as to receive a sensible gratification in every accession made to its glory: But as each was by the same propensity led to exalt his individual self, it became the prime object of the ambitious, to set up his own peculiar idol for the adoration of the multitude; and as this could only be done by general consent, it was necessary that he should make interest with the whole body, by supporting the pretensions of the aggregate, however impious or absurd.

We may observe, in the history of the church, how exactly the idols thus introduced were fashioned after the prevailing temper and taste of the times. While the sophistry taught in the Pagan schools continued in vogue, abstract propositions, speculative subtilties, and mysterious definitions of mysteries not to be defined, were the forms into which these idols were generally carved; and no sooner were they stamped with the authority of the church, than they were declared of divine origin, to be believed of all men, on pain of everlasting damnation.

But when the faculties of the human mind had been, by the restraints thus imposed on their exercise, so far degraded as to produce universal ignorance, glory could no longer be obtained by the invention of speculative absurdities; and it was, accordingly, to sensible objects, that those who in this way sought for distinction, had then recourse.

Happy the man who could introduce the invention of his taylor, or robe-maker, or barber, into the body of the church's ordinances, for there it was to remain to all eternity a memorial of his name. The mystical virtues involved in the cut of his robe, or the colour of its trappings, or the form into which his hair is clipped, might be disputed by the jealous rivals of his fame; but if his influence preponderated, and the sanction of the self-created vicegerent of the Almighty were once obtained, his inventions were transformed into things divine. They thenceforth constituted a part of the body of the idol, and could not be spoken against, without incurring the pains and penalties due to infidelity.

While the church thus held forth a premium to inventions, it preserved to itself the power of chusing or rejecting the inventions with which the ardent imaginations of its votaries, thus stimulated, might

be expected to teem. None were adopted that did not tend to consolidate its usurped dominion over the minds of men; and as it was in proportion to the degree in which they receded from, or opposed the doctrines of Scripture, that they were found to possess this tendency, the Scripture was very wisely concealed from view. The church being the medium through which the favour of the supreme Being was alone to be propitiated, what need was there of inquiring farther? To be obedient to the church being all that was necessary for salvation, obedience became a substitute for every Christian virtue: And as, by this obedience, men could in some degree identify themselves with the church, then in the zenith of power, obedience to the church afforded to the selfish propensity, a sensible gratification. In quest of this gratification, the miser parted with his treasure, the ambitious made a sacrifice of his power, and all ranks and denominations of men yielded up their

conscience, their understandings, and their senses, to the complete and absolute disposal of the church, in whose glory they, by these several sacrifices, purchased a right to participate. While they thus identified themselves with the church, the church was in their minds identified with Omnipotence. And thus did the pride and presumption inseparable from the selfish principle, form the links of an imaginary chain, connecting the individual, not by faith in his God and obedience to his laws, but by faith in the church connecting him with the Eternal.

Of the many gross and palpable absurdities, either authorized or enjoined by the church, I forbear to speak; not only because many of them are now condemned or disclaimed by those who still continue to acknowledge the infallibility of the church in which they sprung, but because, though their absurdity affords a strong proof of the ignorance of the times in which they

were brought into fashion, it affords no better proof of the principle in which they originated, and in which they received the sanction of authority, than if they had been formed on a superior model. Considered in this point of view, to believe in the virtue and efficacy ascribed to the parings of a saint's nails, or to the fragment of an old pocket-handkerchief, was in fact no more absurd, than to believe in the virtue and efficacy of any peculiar notion formed by human imagination. As an idol of human invention, each is alike unworthy of being set up in the temple of the living God. The nature of the workmanship does in reality make no difference; the gross conceptions of vulgar and unenlightened minds being not one whit more unworthy of faith and veneration, as having power to save, than the most ingenious theory that ever was devised by human reason. Nor does there seem any greater absurdity in supposing, on the authority of any man, that the Deity, after having graciously made a

declaration of his will by messengers endowed with power from on high, requires from us a belief in the efficacy of bits of old bones dug from the charnel-house, than to suppose, on the same authority, that he requires from us an implicit acquiescence in the notions and opinions originating in the impure source of human conceit or ingenuity. So infinite is the distance between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man, as to render the difference between the lesser and the greater degree in which reason operates, when it assumes the power of dictating what is necessary to salvation, as nothing.

It is the wisdom of God, and not the wisdom of man, that is the "pearl of great price, for which all we have ought to be sold;" and happy they who have been induced to make the inestimable purchase! Such have been, in every age of Christianity.

Even while the world was apparently overspread with darkness; while, through the predominance of the selfish principle, the truths which had been revealed from heaven, were veiled by mists that appeared impenetrable; light from heaven still continued to irradiate the breasts of the true disciples of Jesus. These, however strict their obedience to the church; however little disposed to question its authority, or to exert their judgment in canvassing its decrees, still preserved upon their minds a lively sense of the relation in which they stood to their Creator. In simplicity and godly sincerity they endeavoured to obey his laws, and notwithstanding all the errors which corrupted the church in whose bosom they remained, evinced the purity of their faith, not only by their exalted piety and cheerful resignation, but by lives devoted to works of charity and mercy. In their writings, as in their lives, the spirit of the gospel was preserved; and to the writings

of many of those true Catholics, who in their days were as "lights shining in a dark place," we still continue to be indebted for strains that aid the glow of devotion, and for views of moral perfection, which tend to energize the moral feelings, and to improve the heart.

Such, even in times and circumstances the most unfavourable, have been the blessed consequences of that true and lively faith, which has for its object what is immutable and eternal! Such the result of contemplating the divine attributes through the medium of that humility which attends the consciousness of human imperfection. The sincere and humble mind no sooner fixes its attention on the nature of truth, than it becomes sensible of the immeasurable distance at which human wisdom is removed, from that which is, in its nature, infinite. With infinite wisdom, the idea of self can, therefore, never be connected; and thus does the contemplation of infinite

wisdom, (whether viewed through the medium of that revelation of it made obvious to the senses in the works of creation, or through the still brighter medium revealed by the Spirit of God, and miraculously preserved for our instruction,) prove the most effectual obstacle to the operation of the selfish principle.

We may farther remark, that in exact proportion as men have, in the formation of theories, been influenced by the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, the propositions in which they deemed their glory to be implicated, have been found untenable. Of the speculative dogmas, which for many successive ages occupied the attention of the learned, and were maintained against the few who dared to combat them, with all the fierceness of intolerant bigotry, how few are at the present day deemed worthy of notice! The very knowledge of their existence has passed away, or only been preserved by a small number of individuals

devoted to study and research. Yet these dogmas of human invention were, each in their time, held forth as necessary to salvation; and thus advanced to an equality with the word of God, which endures for ever!

As nothing seems to have afforded greater subject of triumph to sceptical writers, than the proofs of pride and arrogance exhibited in the intolerating spirit which has, at some period of its history, prevailed in almost every Christian church, it is due to the truths of revelation to show, that the spirit alluded to has, in every case, and under all variety of circumstances, originated in a principle to which the word of God is decidedly adverse; and that it has never been in zeal for establishing the authority of what has been revealed by the Spirit of God, but in zeal for establishing the deductions of human reason, that any of the malignant passions have been produced.

In their zeal to propagate and define their own peculiar notions,—notions with which the idea of self is inseparably connected,—men have always been prone to represent the opinions which serve to distinguish their body, as the whole of religion; and hence, by those whose attention has never been directed to the fountain of truth, the opinions of men have often been combated, when the attack was intended to have been made on higher authority. Thus, whenever religion is mentioned by writers supposed to be adverse to revelation, we may perceive, in their mode of treating it, the effect of the associations that have been thus produced; as, whether the attack made upon religion be open or covert, it is still directed, not against the religion taught by Christ and his apostles, but against what they have been supposed, by some particular sect, to teach. When mention is made of the Popish religion, the Episcopal religion, the Presbyterian religion, &c. they are spoken of as if the very

essence of each consisted in the notions and opinions peculiar to it; and if these are in any instance found to be erroneous or absurd, it is not the men in whom these opinions originated, but *religion*, that is charged with the error or absurdity. Nor is it wonderful that it should be so. Persons accustomed from infancy to hear doctrines invented by men, denominated *the gospel*, are naturally led to charge the gospel with whatever mixture of human imperfection these doctrines may contain.

This most fruitful source of prejudice against religion could have had no existence, if every church, sect, and denomination of Christians, had been careful to separate, and anxious that all should distinguish, between human authority and divine. Their zeal has, in most instances, taken a quite opposite course, and led them to oppose with violence every attempt to discriminate between the light of revelation, and the light of their own understandings, as

evinced in the systems they have formed, and the peculiar opinions they have embraced.

Is it possible to imagine, that any man, or any body of men, can seriously believe that their inventions or explanations are equal to divine revelation? Why then demand for them greater respect than is due to human wisdom? Alas! because divine revelation belongs to God, and these inventions or notions belong to SELF. According to the extent to which they are propagated, does the idea of self extend. By representing them as essential to salvation, they in whom they have originated, whose property they are, and whose glory is built on the connexion, represent themselves as the authors of salvation. But, conscious that such pretensions would be deemed presumptuous, they avoid the consequence, by terming their peculiar notions, not a new revelation from heaven, but a compendium of what has been revealed; and give to this compendium the name of

RELIGION! As the same pretensions are made by all the setters forth of peculiar doctrines, sect becomes at variance with sect, and party with party. But on what points are they at variance? Does any accuse the other of teaching disobedience to the commands of God, or of rejecting the authority of Scripture? No: It is for presuming to do what they themselves have done; for giving to their own notions a degree of consequence, to which no human notions are entitled, that each sect is by the opposing sect accused. It is not for the divine truths on which they have built their several theories, and which are mingled or connected with them, but for what they have added to, and mixed, and connected with the divine truths, that theologians will be found, in every instance in which they have shown intolerance, to have contended.

In divine revelation, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, is the first and great commandment." But by those who have no other notion of religion, who desire the establishment of no other religion, than that which is modelled after the peculiar fancy of the set of human beings with whom they identify themselves, this commandment is set at nought, Their zeal is not a zeal for establishing the dominion of God in the heart of man, but for establishing the dominion of their church or their sect, over all other sects and churches. It is founded in selfishness, and consequently is connected with, and supported by, all the selfish passions.

Intolerance is the natural fruit of this principle. It has not only *no* connexion with religion, but is so utterly incompatible with its spirit, that they are to each other as light and darkness.

The voice of religion proclaims, "Glory to God on high, on earth peace! Good-will

towards the children of men!" The selfish principle, receiving no gratification from this acknowledged supremacy of the Creator, cries aloud, Glory be to us! Peace to those who submit their minds and consciences to our guidance and direction! But wrath, hatred and indignation, against those who dare to approach their God, but in the way and manner of which our superior judgment has approved!

If this statement be correct, we must infer, that according as the knowledge of true religion is diffused, the spirit of intolerance will disappear. That it is by religion, and not by indifference to religion, that it is to be vanquished, is placed beyond all doubt, by the intolerant spirit which has, on some occasions, been displayed by men, who made no pretension to any religious belief whatever.

Are we surprised that intolerance should find advocates among persons to whom all

modes of faith are subjects of derision? Let us recollect the operation of the selfish principle, and our astonishment will cease.

We do not suppose, that all the opinions of every church, and of every sect, are thoroughly understood, and adopted on conviction, by every individual who adheres to that particular sect or establishment. Yet every individual thinks he has a right to defend them as his own. The doctrines of the church are *his doctrines*, not because they have been adopted by his understanding, on being convinced of their correspondence with Scripture truth; but they are *his*, as belonging to the sect, or church, or state, with which he has identified himself.

If it is with the state, or with any party in the state, that he connects the idea of self, the religion of the state, or of the party, will be his religion. He will be impelled to exalt it, to render it pre-eminent,

and through its means to obtain a triumph over the wills and inclinations of his fellow-men. On the other hand, if it be with a religious sect, which seeks to exalt its own peculiar doctrines in opposition to those sanctioned by the state, that he has identified himself, he will be irresistibly impelled to seek the glory of his sect, by representing all religious faith and religious knowledge as comprised in its peculiar notions and opinions. The view taken by his teachers of controverted passages of holy writ, becomes in his eyes more essentially necessary to salvation, than repentance, faith, and obedience: For faith in the promises of God, obedience to his laws, and the repentance necessary towards obtaining the remission of sin, are of the nature of general principles, in adopting of which he cannot procure an enlargement of the idea of self; whereas the explanations and peculiar notions of his teachers, being intimately connected with that idea, present the certain means of magnifying it.

The man whose religion consists in zeal for the peculiar dogmas, or rules of faith, that have been invented and supported by the weak and erring judgment of frail and sinful mortals, is, in reality, the worshipper of created things, and bows to an image devised and formed in the unhallowed furnace of human imagination. This species of idolatry, whatever be the name or nature of its object, invariably originates in the propensity to magnify the idea of self. The doctrines, or mode of discipline, which he idolizes, forms the distinguishing characteristic of the party with which he identifies himself, and are his, because the party is his, inseparably connected in his mind with the idea of self. He stands up the champion of a sect, or church, of which these doctrines form the insignia, and glories in advancing its banner against all opposition, deeming his honour concerned in maintaining the combat.

It is doubtless necessary, that he should conform externally to the peculiar usages of his party, and adopt such modes of dress, manners, or phraseology, as serve to distinguish it; but it is by no means necessary, that his conscience should bear him witness that he worships God in spirit and in truth. It is sufficient that he worships God after the form prescribed by the party to which he belongs. In the defence of that form of words, he may be obstinately vehement; for, as *his own*, every selfish passion is engaged to defend it, and to assert its superiority over all other forms. He may even convert the mode of worshipping the Deity into an instrument of ambition, of tyranny, of oppression. But the instrument is fatal to those who use it; producing, at best, a triumph that endures but for a moment, succeeded by defeat, and misery, and woe.

It cannot be too impressively remarked, that it is only the dogmas invented by man

that have ever been thus employed. The religion revealed from heaven is not of a nature to be made subservient to the purposes of man's ambition. Let us examine the history of what have been erroneously denominated *religious wars*, and we shall perceive that they bear ample testimony to this fact. We shall there find, that it has, in every instance, been for doctrines and opinions fabricated by man, and with which all who embraced them could consequently connect the idea of self, that war has been let forth in all its fury, to chastise, and if possible to annihilate, those who dared to assert a difference of opinion. It is in the vain hope of eternizing and giving omnipotence to human inventions, that armies have been devoted to slaughter, and nations overwhelmed with ruin. It is in the malignant feelings excited by opposition to these impious pretensions, that all the horrors of persecution have originated, and all the positive commandments of the God of mercy have been outraged and despised.

The external acts of the bigot must be modified by the circumstances in which he is placed, and by the degree of power of which he is possessed. But the spirit remains, in all circumstances, the same: it is still the desire of subjecting the wills of others to his will, the opinions of others to his opinion, and thus procuring an enlargement of the idea of self, that inspires his breast. It is not on account of the importance of the truths with which his opinions are connected, that he desires to exalt them, but on account of their connexion with *self;* it is therefore that he claims for these productions of human wisdom, the praise, and honour, and glory, due to the wisdom of God. The claim, by whomsoever it is made, is impious, and the manifestation of zeal in its support, so far from being a proof of religion in the zealot, is a proof of the ascendency of the selfish principle over the spirit of religion in his heart. It is the zeal of party; a zeal that

may burn with as much fury in the breast of an atheist, as in that of a devotee.

Having, as I hope, shown, that intolerance can only proceed from a desire of procuring gratification to the selfish propensity, and that the doctrines which have derived aid from its support, are the doctrines of men and not of God, I should most willingly pursue the subject a little farther, could I hope to impress on others the conviction I cherish, with respect to the final triumph of the religion of the gospel; when man shall no longer labour to impose the heavy yoke of man's invention on his fellow-men, but each individual, to whatever church or sect he may belong, in love to his brethren of mankind, labour to lead them to obey the call of him "whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light."

That it is by the exertions of men in their individual capacity, that the Christian

spirit is most likely to be disseminated, may be plainly inferred, from the sentiments and conduct of all public bodies, whether secular or ecclesiastic. But when the individuals of whom the latter are composed, shall be content to acknowledge, that all that is of human origin partakes of human imperfection, and be more anxious that all should conform their hearts and lives to the doctrines of the gospel, than that all should adopt the very notions that have been by them adopted—then will the sun of righteousness arise, and dispel the darkness of superstition and infidelity.

As the spirit of true religion produces the benignant spirit of toleration, the spirit of toleration has by re-action a tendency to extend the empire of religion. To the authority of the supreme Being, all men are willing to submit. It is against the authority of man that the pride of man revolts. It is by a re-action of the selfish principle, that all revolutions in church

and state are brought about. However men may, by the selfish principle, be led to argue with respect to others, with respect to himself, every man feels liberty of conscience to be his birth-right. His external actions may be controlled, but his mind can never be forced into bondage. All its operations are free. Placed by the Almighty beyond the power of human tyranny, the thoughts are never subject to violence. By no efforts can a man be convinced, unless his own judgment operate in producing the conviction; an operation of judgment which never takes place under the influence of external force. But it is not in order to produce conviction that compulsory measures are resorted to. The aim in such cases is, to compel the heretic to relinquish that with which he has hitherto connected the idea of self, and to substitute in its room that with which we identify ourselves. But even this is an act of the will, not to be effected by our violence, but by the operation of the selfish principle in his

own breast. We cannot possibly model its operations to our will and pleasure. The application of force has, indeed, a quite contrary tendency: It rouses the mind to assert its freedom: The spirit of opposition gains strength from the sense of oppression. If compelled to suppress his own sentiments, and by silence to imply an acquiescence in the opinions imposed upon him, these opinions, and every badge or sign of these opinions, are viewed with horror, as instruments of tyranny; and not only those who impose, but those who embrace them, become objects of his indignation and resentment.

In his individual capacity he may not dare to make resistance, but obeying the impulse of the selfish principle, he identifies himself with all who are not identified with his oppressors: The association secretly gains strength, and, when matured, bursts into open rebellion, which, if successful, ends not simply in producing free-

dom to the enthralled, but in enabling them in their turns to fix the yoke of mental bondage on the necks of their former oppressors.

Those who are best acquainted with ecclesiastical history, will be least disposed to dispute the truth of these remarks. What then prevents the more enlightened members of every Christian church from profiting by the lessons of experience, which testify the inutility and folly of endeavouring to give infinity to what is in its nature finite, and immortality to what is in its nature perishable? From experience we learn, that it is in vain we labour to affix the signet of eternity to any of the inventions of men; and that whenever zeal has been thus employed, it has only, by its fervor, served to precipitate the destruction of whatever is, in its nature, destructable, in the form of doctrine it would preserve for ever. It is for the preservation of what is, in its nature, perishable, that

zeal is kindled to its utmost fury; for it is only with what is perishable, that is to say, with what is of human origin, that the idea of self can be connected. It is this which constitutes the zealot's idol: but, as he contends for its divinity, he directs the attention of the adversary to the mortal part, and, in fact, furnishes the means of attacking it, in the weapons he had provided for its defence. But what becomes of the interests of religion during the conflict? Against the religion of Christ, we are assured, that no effort of the selfish principle, though issuing from the gates of hell, shall finally prevail; but we are from the same authority assured, that even where it has been planted, and cherished, and brought forth fruits of righteousness, it may for a time be obscured, and even, to all appearance, annihilated. This is the natural, the inevitable consequence, of that zeal for institutions of human origin, which, by withdrawing the attention from divine truths, to fix it on the productions of hu-

man reason, substitutes the religion made by man, for the religion revealed to man by the Spirit of God.

Ought we then to renounce all interest in the prosperity of the church to which we belong, and to keep our minds in a state of perfect indifference, so as to preclude all partiality or preference for any mode of faith, or worship, more than for another? This, I am aware, is the inference which zealots and infidels will be inclined to make from the premises, though they by no means warrant such a conclusion.

All that can fairly be inferred from what I have presumed to advance upon this subject, is, that the dictates of reason, and of experience, and of revelation, conspire to impress us with a deep conviction, that though we ought to render to the wisdom of man its due, we never ought to render to human wisdom the tribute that is due

to the wisdom of God. Of this it seems to me that we are guilty, as often as we represent the adoption of our peculiar opinions, founded on our peculiar views and explanations of Scripture, as necessary to salvation. The doctrine and discipline of our church may, and on serious consideration probably will, appear to us to approach as near perfection as human frailty will admit: But its doctrines are still only the deductions of human wisdom, and, as such, must be mingled with some portion of error.

If we are convinced that our church, instituted as all churches are instituted, "for the preservation and communication of religious knowledge,"* eminently fulfils the purpose of its institution, we shall submit to its authority with sentiments of filial respect and veneration. By gratitude for

* PALEY's Moral Philosophy, vol. ii. p. 305.

the instruction received through its medium, and by habitual sympathy with our fellow-worshippers, our affections will become yet more deeply interested, and our benevolent feelings will thus be rendered instrumental in strengthening our attachment.

But how will our attachment under such circumstances be displayed? Will it be shown in the spirit of intolerance and of vindictive zeal? Will it induce us to hate and contemn all who imagine, that the interpretations given of the sacred text by their teachers, approaches nearer to the truth than that given by ours? No. Assured that all that is human must necessarily partake of human imperfection, we shall neither be surprised nor provoked, to find that imperfection is charged on the opinions we have embraced, and which we adhere to, not as believing them infallible, but as appearing in our judgment most consonant to truth.

Let us ask, in what respect the interests of the church would suffer, were the zeal of all its members to be circumscribed within those bounds, to which, by an acknowledgment of its partaking in human imperfection, it must necessarily be limited?

In the first place, the zeal for its prosperity, tempered by the benevolent affections, would be productive of increased attention to the circumstance on which its prosperity depends. In order to prove that it has been instituted in wisdom, pains would be taken to exemplify its utility, in the only manner in which it can truly be exemplified, viz. in the fruits of that religious knowledge which it has been the means of diffusing.

The greater our attachment to the church, the more ardently should we endeavour to show, that its fruits are of the true vine, fraught with the spirit of love, and charity, and peace. Whether the establishment

would be most likely to be overthrown by zeal of this description, or by that zeal for the church which is productive of clamour, and wrath, and malice, and uncharitableness, no one who believes the truths of the gospel can be at any loss to decide.

The zeal manifested in the former instance, is of that character which always marks the integrity of our regard to truth. The zeal manifested in the latter, is of the character which as invariably marks our regard to that which affords to us the means of magnifying the idea of self.

In the very imperfect sketch in which I have attempted to delineate some of the more striking operations of the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, it appears such a fruitful source of moral evil, as might jus-

tify an opinion of its being the corrupt principle of human nature. But it is not with a view to forming, or to supporting a theory, that I have presumed to lay the fruits of my observations and reflections before the reader. It is in the hopes of introducing such trains of thought, as, if prosecuted to advantage, cannot fail of proving salutary to the mind intent on self-improvement, of which self-knowledge must necessarily be the precursor. Believing, that by what I have stated this purpose will be sufficiently answered, I have refrained from pursuing the subject into branches, where it must have appeared in a yet more revolting aspect. To inquire how far the propensity to enlarge the idea of self operates in instigating the sensual appetites, might not be a useless, but would be a hateful task; and could only be accomplished by one, whose acquaintance with the vicious, or the dissipated, afforded opportunities of observing the rise and progress of the passions by which they

are degraded and enslaved. In this point of view, it is a task for which I am happily disqualified. But to every person at all conversant with history, or with the manners of the world, general observations upon the subject must occur, and these invariably lead to a conclusion, that one of the greatest sources of depravity in young minds is, the desire of identifying themselves with that description of persons, who glory in throwing off the restraints imposed by morality and religion.

Whenever the vicious form a party, the glory of the party will be augmented by every increase of vice, and by every increase of numbers. Hence the eagerness to corrupt and sully the youthful imagination, which, we are assured from good authority, has been frequently evinced in the writings and conversation of men of depraved minds. Hence the gradual deterioration of national character, which will in every stage of society be found to corres-

pond with the character of the objects most generally resorted to for procuring an enlargement of the idea of self.

When it is by deeds of valour, and exploits of heroism, that the idea of self is most effectually expanded, the great majority of the people will be brave and hardy, and the character of the nation warlike. When wealth is sought after, as the means of procuring a similar gratification to the selfish propensity, the pursuit of wealth will engross the general attention; and, from the habits thus introduced, the nation will be characterized as frugal and industrious. But it is only where certain moral principles and fundamental truths, embodied in the form of just and equal laws, presents to every citizen an object wherewith he may identify himself, that the character of a people will ever be found to rise pre-eminent in the scale of excellence. The propensity to enlarge the idea of self is here gratified, under the controul

of principles that divest it of all malignant and pernicious tendency; for as the laws and constitution of his country are objects in which all his fellow-citizens have an equal right to glory, he, by identifying himself with all for whose benefit they were instituted, becomes interested in the prosperity and happiness of every class in the community. It is obvious, that supposing all to be actuated by the same principle, it would tend, not only to increase the greatness, consolidate the power, and exalt the glory of the nation, but increase the influence of the benevolent affections in every individual breast. Such are the consequences of pure patriotism.

It might perhaps be, on the other hand, observed, that when the propensity to enlarge the idea of self no longer impels the greater number of individuals to identify themselves with what constitutes the happiness and glory of the nation at large, but with what constitutes the glory of

some particular class or description of persons, it may be deemed a certain symptom of decline. The tie by which individuals were bound to the general interest is then dissolved. It is the interest of that part of the community with which they identify themselves, for which they now become solicitous. The nation thus comes to be divided against itself; and as the benevolent affections, when confined to a contracted sphere, lose their influence, the decay of patriotism is marked by the decay of virtue.

If the objects with which the leading members in the community are seen to connect the idea of self, be nowise connected with the general good; if, on the contrary, they be mean, contemptible, and frivolous, (and such are all the puerile enjoyments of vanity and luxury,) it is evident that the national character must sink. How important are the considerations that hence arise!—But, in presuming to glance at these, I have wandered out of my more

appropriate sphere, and therefore hasten to return to the humbler walk of private life.

Having, in some of the preceding chapters, had occasion to point out the malignant feelings excited by a disappointment of gratification to the selfish principle, it is necessary, before concluding this imperfect sketch, to show how such disappointment operates when not productive of malignity. In persons who, from natural temperament, or the habitual influence of religious and moral principle, are incapable of indulging the emotions of jealousy, envy, or resentment, the propensity to enlarge the idea of self, though it engenders no hatred or ill-will to others, is frequently productive of misery to the individual. Let us examine the foundation of all those querulous murmurs in which persons of acute sensibility, and conscious genius, so frequently indulge. Of what do they complain? Do they substantiate their claim on our com-

passion, by describing their situation as exposing them to an unusual share of physical or moral evil? No: They have neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor calamity of any kind to mention, as particularly distinguishing their lot. Yet still they are miserable. And why are they miserable? Because their efforts to expand the idea of self have been unsuccessful. Others have not sought to augment their glory, by identifying themselves with the same objects with which they were identified. Hence they seem to stand alone in society. All by whom they are surrounded seem bent on repressing them, and diminishing in their minds that notion of self, which incessantly struggles for expansion. Worn out by these ineffectual efforts, they sink into despondency; or only revive occasionally, when, for a moment, they are permitted to taste that gratification for which their hearts have never ceased to pant; but which is no sooner withheld, than they are again shrouded in darkness. And this, even while reason

holds her seat, and is capable of appreciating the value of those numerous blessings, of which every individual in this terrestrial scene has his portion; and the more inestimable value of those hopes of everlasting happiness brought to light by the gospel! What better argument can be offered, for the necessity of vigilantly guarding against the influence of a propensity, which, even in amiable minds, can produce ingratitude to God for all his precious benefits? What greater incitement can we require, to examine with attention what means have, in the order of Providence, been appointed to save us from the dominion of desires that lead to misery, and of finally extinguishing the corrupt principle, whose end is death?

ESSAY V.

INQUIRY

INTO THE

MEANS APPOINTED BY PROVIDENCE

FOR THE

DEVELOPMENT AND CULTIVATION

OF THE

BENEVOLENT AFFECTIONS.

ESSAY V.

INQUIRY INTO THE MEANS APPOINTED BY PROVIDENCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND CULTIVATION OF THE BENEVOLENT AFFECTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary observations. Means appointed by Providence for the development and cultivation of the affections. Agency of attention in developing the affections in the infant heart. Illustrations.

As the benefit to be derived from the discussion of any serious and important point, is not to be estimated merely by the value of the knowledge communicated, but by the tendency which it has to impel the current of thought into channels that lead to the discovery of truth, I may boldly claim the

reader's attention to remarks and arguments, that, considered in themselves, might be too trivial to demand regard, but which may nevertheless serve to introduce trains of thought that might not otherwise have occurred.

The subject on which I propose now to enter, is indeed both serious and important; for if the propensity to magnify the idea of self be inherent in our hearts, and if its unrestrained operations be productive of evil and misery, what more important than to inquire, whether any means, natural or supernatural, has been granted, for diminishing its force and counteracting its influence? To my mind it appears, that this twofold provision for remedying the evils produced by the depraving propensity of our nature has been made; and these shall be examined in the order in which they have now been mentioned, premising, that the hints which I presume to offer are given in singleness of heart, not as authoritative,

but simply as the result of reflections long and seriously pursued, and of observations that have in my own mind produced conviction.

In pursuing this inquiry, I have not implicitly relied on human authority, but have with joy, in every step as I advanced, perceived clearer and more decisive proofs of the perfect correspondence between the facts of which we obtain a knowledge by observation, and the truths promulgated for our instruction by infallible Wisdom.

It is surely to be regretted, that philosophers have so seldom availed themselves of the assistance derived from Scripture, in the study of the human mind;—to be regretted, on the other hand, that those most versant in Scripture have frequently, from despising the knowledge obtained by observation and experience, been led to form notions respecting the nature of man, re-

pugnant to all that experience and observation has justified.

Such are the consequences of directing the attention exclusively to such objects as may afford support to a favourite theory, when presented in a certain point of view; and to this purpose, it must be confessed, divine revelation has been too frequently applied. Hence has arisen most of those extravagant pretensions, or absurd conclusions, with respect to human nature, which have from time to time been espoused, set forth, and defended with all the warmth of party-zeal, and rendered fatally instrumental in exciting all the rancour of party-animosity.

Hence has been claimed for human nature, on the one hand, a degree of purity and perfection, controverted by fact, and totally inconsistent with experience; while, on the other, it has been vilified and degraded, its benevolent affections represent-

ed as useless, and all its intellectual powers as necessarily subservient to the spirit of darkness; not merely weak and imperfect, but in all their operations sinful, and consequently hateful in the sight of God.

Such false and exaggerated representations of the views given in Scripture of man's powers and faculties, has an evident tendency to deter the philosophical inquirer from searching the sacred volumes, to which, if he confides in their authenticity, he would naturally resort. For if we believe that God, in ancient times, spake to our fathers by the prophets, and that at a latter period "he has spoken to us by his Son," we must of necessity conclude, that these miraculous revelations of his will were, in every instance, adapted to the powers and faculties of the beings to whom they were addressed.

Every divine command, respecting what is to be done, or left undone, presupposes

in man a power to will and to act; affords evidence, that he is not a mere machine, whose motions are directed by an irresistible impulse. Every instruction, every precept, addressed to the understanding by the Author and Framer of our spirits, supposes in man a power to reason and to judge. Every exhortation to the exercise of the benevolent affections, infers a knowledge of their existence in the human heart; and every reproof for having yielded to the evil propensities and passions productive of criminal disobedience, argues that the principle, from which these evil passions and propensities proceed, is inherent in our nature.

And here it is worthy of remark, that divine revelation, which may be considered as a super-added means of improvement to the human race, though addressed, in the first place, to the understanding, is evidently not designed for the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, but tends,

throughout, to aid and assist the human will, in struggling against the dominion of the selfish principle, by increasing the influence of the benevolent affections. If, on investigating the method adopted by infinite Wisdom to effect this great end, we find, that he " to whom all hearts are open, to whom all desires are manifest, and from whom no secrets are hid," did not, by directing the attention to objects that exclusively employ the intellectual faculties, afford to these faculties any preternatural means of improvement, we may safely infer, that it is not by the improvement of intellect, nor by the exercise of reason, that the evil propensity of our nature is to be effectually controlled.

If, on the other hand, it was by increasing the influence of the benevolent affections, that the Almighty, in prosecuting the merciful designs of his providence, seems, if we may presume thus to speak, to have endeavoured to repair the ravages of sin,

and to stem the torrent of iniquity, we may infer, that it is by the operation of those affections that the evil principle of our nature can alone be effectually combated. From the history of mankind, through the ages that are past; from our observations on the conduct of those around us; and from our reflections on what passes in our own hearts, the inference is confirmed. All experience testifying, that, in proportion to the degree in which the benevolent affections maintain an habitual ascendency in the breast, the propensity to magnify the idea of self is weakened and controlled.

The analogy between natural and revealed religion, the unity of design to be perceived in all the plans of Providence, would induce us *a priori* to conclude, that, if the operation of the benevolent affections are thus essential, some provision for their development and cultivation has been made by nature, in the original constitution of

the mind, adapted to the circumstances in which human beings are placed. That this is actually the case, will, without difficulty, be rendered obvious. In examining the nature of the means allotted by Providence, for developing the intellectual powers, we perceived attention to be (as it were) the master-key by which they are successively unlocked; and as nature is never lavish of means, we need not be surprised to find, that the affections are rendered dependant for their development on the operations of the same agent. Concerning the agency of attention, in cultivating the affections, some observations have been offered in treating of the principles of taste. But it is necessary to go farther into the subject, in order to prove that the benevolent affections operate just so far, and no farther, than as attention has been habitually given to the objects that afford them exercise; and that the degree in which they expand corresponds exactly to the degree in which they have thus been

exercised. And as no proof of the impartiality with which the Divine Being has bestowed his gifts, ought to be passed unnoticed, we may with propriety, at the commencement of the inquiry, observe, that though the degree to which the faculties and affections are to be cultivated, depends on circumstances over which the will of man has complete controul, the provision made for their development is in a great measure placed beyond the power of man, and is in consequence enjoyed by all. Were it otherwise, were it possible for man to seal up the power of attention in the infant mind, so as to prevent the acquirement of ideas from the objects of perception, and to preclude the emotions of sympathy from the object of tenderness, we have good reason to believe, that man, under the dominion of his fellow-men, would have had all the faculties of his understanding, and all the feelings of his heart, extinguished. But while, in spite of the tyranny of his fellow-creatures, man, however lowly

in circumstances, enjoys the full benefit of the provision made by nature for expanding the germ of intellect, and awakening the sensibilities of the heart, the species can never be degraded, but must remain for ever essentially the same; under every form of despotism, under every variety of climate, born heir to the inheritance of faculties and affections susceptible of cultivation.

Let us now observe in what manner attention is in the infant mind awakened, and directed to objects that gradually excite the emotions of affection. It seems, in the first instance, to be by physical sensation that this prime agent is set in motion: The sensations of pain and pleasure, occasioned by the want, and by the supply, of the nutriment essential to the preservation of life. During the first weeks of its existence, it seems to be susceptible only of sensation, and when completely at ease, shows little sign of animation. By

degrees, however, the perceptions are awakened, and the nurse becomes an object of attention; it is her voice that first soothes the ear, her tender endearments that first delight the heart. Sole source of all its circumscribed enjoyments, the little creature clings to her bosom, as to an asylum where it is certain of protection.

As its faculties begin to open, other objects attract its notice, but it is to her caresses that it returns with ever-new delight, and by the sympathies which these excite, that the germ of affection is expanded in its little soul. As yet, the love which it feels for her is indiscriminating: It is like that which the inferior animals bear towards the persons who caress and feed them. But when, by a little farther exercise of attention, it perceives in her tender care the effects of her provident kindness and affection, a faint emotion of gratitude is produced, which, by the further exercise of attention to the same objects, will, as I

have elsewhere shown, soon be rendered a predominant feeling in its breast.*

By persons who have never been led to mark, with discriminating accuracy, the feelings of the infant heart, it is generally supposed, that the love of children is always to be purchased by indulging their humours, or gratifying their palates. But those who take the trouble of observing farther, will be convinced, that the emotions thus produced are essentially different from the pure emotions of affection; and that, even in infancy, a belief of pure and amiable motives in the benefactor must exist, before love can be excited. The attention of the infant must, indeed, in the natural course of things, be directed to the kindness manifested by those who gratify his wishes, and supply his wants; and the gratitude consequent on the perception of kindness,

* See Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, vol. i.

will, under proper management, render his heart more and more susceptible of the emotions of affection. Even in infancy a child will naturally desire the happiness of those he loves, if their happiness is made an object of attention. By attention to their feelings, sympathy will infallibly be produced; and by its operation he will be impelled to "rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep." Before the complete development of his intellectual powers, his sympathy will necessarily be confined to those with whom he is immediately connected, and who have from the dawn of existence been the objects of his attention. But as the sphere of his observation is enlarged, and the faculties of his understanding are strengthened by exercise, his attention will be directed to certain qualities of mind; and in proportion as he experiences from the operation of these in others an increase of happiness, he will learn to appreciate their excellence. The same qualities of kindness, generosity, for-

bearance, placability, &c. which, when exhibited in the conduct of his parents, friends, or companions, have delighted, or gratified, or soothed his heart, will, when presented to his imagination, excite his sympathy; and the habitual exercise of this sympathy will, in every instance, be found to tend to the habitual exercise of the qualities which are the objects of it. In the heart in which the affections have been thus regularly cultivated, the ideas of justice, charity, and mercy, of magnanimity, fortitude, and all other qualities that are in their nature beneficent, will produce emotions correspondent to the quality that is the object of contemplation. And where sympathy in all or in any of these qualities is sufficiently powerful, a tendency to these qualities will certainly be produced. As it is beneficent qualities that are alone capable of exciting affection; and as, in every active exercise of such qualities, the attention must be directed to the state, or circumstances, or feelings of others, the exercise

of them is obviously incompatible with the co-existing exercise of the selfish principle. A man may labour to extend and magnify the idea of self, by acts of charity; but if the feelings of the objects he relieves excite his sympathy, and this sympathy becomes habitual, the idea of self will be banished, and the desire to relieve triumph over the desire of obtaining admiration. The same may be observed with respect to all the qualities, which, from their tendency, as promoting and diffusing happiness, are denominated virtues. Before they can have any operation in the human breast, they must excite its sympathy: Nor will casual and transient sympathy establish the influence of any virtuous quality in the heart; it is by habitual sympathy that it is to be rendered an habitual motive or principle of action.

If this sympathy is itself a principle of the mind, and, like all its other principles, susceptible of cultivation and improve-

ment, it is surely of some importance to inquire, at what period of life it may be cultivated to most advantage; what are the means to be employed in developing it; and what the impediments most likely to obstruct its exercise?

Whoever puts these questions seriously to himself, will be at no loss for an answer. He will perceive, that as it is in the period of infancy that sympathy first operates in producing the emotions of affection, the period of infancy must be that in which sympathy may be most effectually cultivated; and that its improvement can only be effected, by attention to the objects which afford it exercise. He will perceive, that in proportion as a child's attention has been directed to the kindness and affection he experiences from others, he will be disposed to show kindness and affection. This is the first result of sympathy. It will afterwards be produced by association, and be excited as often as the ideas of kindness

and affection are presented to his mind: but at first, these ideas are embodied in the persons of those by whom he is cherished and protected. Nor, though he should by such persons be occasionally corrected or coerced, will the correction check the current of affection. It will, on the contrary, by forcibly turning his attention to his own weakness and folly, beget humility and distrust of himself, and sorrow for the distress he has occasioned to those in whose love he has entire confidence. The sympathy in their feelings may thus produce an increase of affection; and would not fail to have this effect, were parents, in correcting their children, never actuated by passion or caprice.

Thus far the provision made by nature for the development of the affections, is open alike to all. So equally is all that is essential to happiness disseminated by Providence, that by those tender endearments of parental love which germinate affec-

tion, the child of the beggar may have the sympathies of its little heart as effectually awakened, as the child of the monarch.

But, in every rank and situation, the prevalence of the selfish principle in the heart of the parent, tends, as far as it operates, to destroy the effects of this merciful dispensation of Providence, and to render it in some measure useless. In this respect there is little difference between the wise and the foolish, the cultivated and the uncultivated; the tendency to enlarge the idea of self prompting to the same species of conduct, whatever be the description of intellect. Whenever the selfish principle has obtained a predominating influence in the parent's breast, the child will be considered, not merely as an object of tender love, exciting and affording perpetual exercise to all the benevolent affections, but as an object so connected with the idea of self, as to afford means of expanding that idea: And whether vanity, pride, or ambi-

tion, be the ruling passion, that passion will seek its gratification through the medium of the creature with whom the parent considers himself to be completely identified.

Let us examine this point a little farther, and we shall observe, that the vain mother awakens the vanity of her child, by directing its attention to objects that afford gratification to her own vanity. Whatever be her rank or situation, by the admiration bestowed upon her child, the idea of self is magnified; and, consequently, no circumstance that can excite or augment this admiration is neglected. If dress or personal beauty be objects in which she places her glory, she incessantly directs the attention of her child to the glory he derives from his fine clothes and pretty person. If she desires to be contemplated as identified with that class in society that gives the law to fashion, with what pains does she labour to impress the infant mind with

notions of the glory derived from a connexion with what is fashionable, and with a correspondent desire to obtain admiration by establishing the connexion. If her mind be superior to such paltry ambition, and her feelings and principles inspire her with a real and unfeigned desire to do good to her fellow-creatures, if, (and, alas! the case is by no means unprecedented), if the desire to expand the idea of self mingles with her zeal to serve,—while she teaches her children to be charitable, she teaches them to be vain of the charity they bestow. Their good deeds are rendered the object of admiration, the perpetual theme of praise. In order to enhance the admiration, they are exaggerated, sometimes exaggerated at the expense of truth: for whenever the gratification of the propensity to magnify the idea of self is in question, the attention is so entirely absorbed by that object, as to render the departure from truth almost irresistible.

But is it thus that the benevolent affections are to be cultivated? Is it not rather thus, that, by the vanity of the parent, the selfish principle may be made so powerfully to operate, as to obtain a perpetual ascendency in the heart?

All this may doubtless be counteracted: Other associations may be introduced; other passions may prove stronger than vanity, so as to render the character in after life very different from that to which the vain mother had laboured to form it. But that the propensity to magnify the idea of self, when thus stimulated into action, may not continue to operate, until it finally and effectually counteracts the tendency of the benevolent affections, and destroys their influence, will not be questioned.

When the selfish principle is united with pride or ambition, in the minds of those from whom the infant is to receive his first

impressions, the check given to the development of the benevolent affections will be still more fatal. Some of the consequences arising from undefined, but early imbibed, notions of an inherent superiority, have been pointed out in a former section; where it was shown, that pride does not necessarily arise from being distinguished by the circumstances of exalted rank, illustrious birth, or splendid fortune; but from that expansion of the idea of self, to which the emotions excited by these circumstances in those around him, naturally impel the infant, before he is capable of comprehending why or wherefore he is considered superior to others. This notion of superiority is, however, too gratifying to the pride of the parents to be repressed. It is, on the contrary, cherished with the utmost care. It is in being identified with him, that the child of the proud man is taught to glory. It thus learns to contemplate itself as separated and distinguished from its fellow-creatures. Independent of their

admiration or esteem, the idea of self is magnified in its little breast, and therefore of admiration or esteem it becomes completely careless.

Is it possible to suppose, that the benevolent affections will ever, under these circumstances, become so operative as to afford any counteraction to the selfish principle? The child in whose heart pride has been thus grafted, must be for ever a stranger to the most pure and copious sources of enjoyment. The happiness of others having never been made to him an object of attention, no idea of contributing to human felicity will ever delight his heart. For the sufferings of his fellow-creatures he will, for the same reason, have no sympathy; and as for the delightful emotions of gratitude, they can evidently be never experienced by him who receives every favour, as he has been accustomed to receive every kindness, as a tribute and a right.

Even during the period of infancy we may observe, that where the affections have been thus suppressed, the selfish principle operates without controul or counteraction. The child's efforts to enlarge the idea of self, are indeed made without judgment, but they are made unremittingly, and, from every triumph of self-will, obtain additional strength. The operation of the principle does, indeed, generally take its character from the character of those who first excite its activity in the infant mind. Thus, the vain mother, by directing the attention of her child to the glory he derives from fine clothes, pretty toys, &c. renders the gratification of the selfish principle dependent on admiration. The proud, by directing his attention to the circumstances that mark his superiority in wealth or station, prompts him to expand the idea of self, by notions of inherent difference between him and his fellow-creatures; which is increased by the subserviency of others to his will,

so as to render that subserviency essential to his gratification.

It is evident, that in these instances the conduct of the parent, which has thus excited the operation of the selfish principle in the heart of the child, is pure self-indulgence. It is the fruits of the selfish principle in her own heart. She awakens the vanity of her child by what affords gratification to her own vanity. She permits him to annoy, torment, or tyrannize over others, because, as identified with him, she enjoys the triumph thus obtained over their wills; and she cherishes in him the insolence of pride, as serving to mark the right derived from her, to pre-eminence and distinction. But the misguided parent does not get leave to counteract the designs of Providence with impunity. By the *immediate* and inevitable consequences, the Almighty calls her to reflect on the future and more important consequences that will

follow her persisting in a mode of conduct, which has tended to lessen the power of the benevolent affections, and to increase the influence of the selfish principle in the breast of her child. The vindictive and malignant passions consequent on the indulgence of the selfish propensity, early begin to operate on the temper; and by that law of our nature, which it is impossible for parents to counteract, the child suffers the misery appointed by Providence, as the punishment of such tempers and dispositions. Thus the selfish gratification of the parent is, even at this early period, visited and punished in the person of her child.

The different degrees in which men seem to be susceptible of those tender sympathies on which the happiness of social life so much depends, is frequently considered as constitutional: and that some minds may not be endowed by nature with a greater portion of sensibility than others, I am little inclined to question. But when we

see, that in almost every instance in which we know the sympathetic affections to have been early cultivated, they continue to operate to the latest period of life; and that, in almost every instance in which their cultivation has been neglected, they exert but feeble influence, and frequently are never seen to operate at all, we must conclude, that the difference observable may, in most cases, be fairly ascribed to education.

By education the attention is directed to certain objects, and classes of objects, adapted to the various faculties of the understanding; and by education the ideas of good or evil are associated with such of these objects of attention, as possess qualities capable of exciting in us any modification of love or aversion.

Where, therefore, attention has been directed to the qualities of the heart, those qualities that are in their nature amiable

and beneficial, will not be long viewed with indifference; they will excite in the mind not only complacency, but affection. Where, on the contrary, the attention has never been directed to these qualities, and where no idea of good has been attached to them, they will be no farther objects of regard than as they can be rendered useful to the individual. As life advances, the judgment may learn to discern and appreciate them, but they will not produce esteem; for esteem is not purely an act of the understanding, it is a mingled act of the understanding and of the affections.

By the person whose heart has never been taught to love moral excellence, merit may be understood and approved, but the approbation will be too cold and inefficient to counteract the operation of the selfish principle. By him whose love, from being habitually exercised, is easily excited on the appearance of what is amiable, while his judgment remains, for want of cultiva-

tion, tardy and defective, the value of every amiable quality will be so far over-rated, as to expose his heart to many wounds of disappointment. But, as the strength of judgment is progressive, increasing with the increase of exercise, and improved by experience, while the affections, if not early cultivated, become dormant or obtuse; there can be no hesitation in pronouncing the inconvenience arising from their excess, to be trivial, in comparison of the evil attending their annihilation.

If, therefore, the affections are only to be cultivated by attention to such objects as are calculated to excite and exercise them, it must be considered as an inestimable benefit, to have had the mind in a manner necessarily directed towards such objects in early life; not merely during the period of infancy only, but through the successive periods of childhood and youth. It is thus alone that the heart can be effectually opened, and rendered capable

of co-operating with the understanding; a circumstance of more importance than seems to have been generally imagined. Were its importance clearly understood or duly weighed, we should see parents and teachers as anxious to cultivate in the hearts of children the feelings of love, and gratitude, and tenderness, as to imbue their minds with knowledge, or adorn them with accomplishments. But, unfortunately, as the cultivation of the affections forms no part of the common ritual of education, it is left dependant on circumstances which do not necessarily occur to all, and which, indeed, do seldom occur to any but those in middling station. The consequences are such as might reasonably be expected. The circumstances in which the higher and the lower ranks are placed being equally unfavourable to the cultivation of the affections, the sentiments in which the affections and the understanding mingle, are seldom known to either.

The greater cultivation of intellect in the one class than in the other, makes in this respect no difference. The only advantage enjoyed by a man of cultured mind over the uncultured, when neither have had the sympathies of the heart improved by habitual exercise, consists merely in being more capable of discerning the value of certain moral qualities. But if these qualities excite in him no affection, is there no reason to apprehend, that if they are qualities in which he is himself deficient, the desire of magnifying the idea of self may interpose to influence his judgment? Though virtue may, in general, be the object of his approbation, is it probable that he will acknowledge that virtue to exist in any with whom the idea of self is not connected? What then becomes of that boasted superiority of judgment, which is supposed to confer on him such a manifest advantage? The uneducated of the lower ranks cannot, indeed, appreciate the qualities that are the proper objects of esteem, when these qualities have

never been the objects of their attention; and when they are left destitute of religious instruction, there is little chance that their attention should ever be thus directed. But even where they are capable of discerning and approving the qualities of justice, sincerity, generosity, &c. the uncultivated state of their affections prevents their feeling any esteem for those in whose conduct these qualities are conspicuous. It is by selfish considerations alone, that they are impelled to love or to hate, to praise or to censure. And when exceptions to this occur, when persons in humble life evince a regard for qualities that are the proper objects of esteem, independently of all considerations of personal interest, we may generally trace to the cultivation of the affections in early life, the cause of this exception.

CHAPTER II.

Correspondence between the degree of attention bestowed, and the degree of sympathy produced, illustrated. Theory of Mr A. Smith. Paternal affection. Examples.

THE mistaken notion, so generally entertained, of the spontaneous development and spontaneous operation of the affections, has been productive of great and serious evils. Viewing the affections as intuitive, or instinctive, the cultivation of them has by some been deemed unnecessary; by others, considered as impracticable.

As it is of importance to correct a mistake whose consequences are so injurious, I shall endeavour to collect, within a narrow compass, such proofs of the exact cor-

respondence between the manner and degree in which the affections operate, and the manner and degree in which the attention has been directed to the objects of affection, as may serve to throw some light upon the subject.

The love which near relations usually bear to each other being that which is most commonly ascribed to natural instinct, demands our first consideration. In the remarks concerning it I am anticipated by a venerable philosopher, who justly observes, that "in some tragedies and romances we meet with many beautiful and interesting scenes, founded upon what is called the force of blood, or upon the wonderful affection which near relations are supposed to conceive for one another, even before they know that they have any such connexion. This force of blood, however, I am afraid, exists nowhere but in tragedies and romances. Even in tragedies and romances it is never supposed to take place between

any relations, but those who are naturally bred up in the same house; between parents and children, between brothers and sisters. To imagine any such mysterious affection between cousins, or even between aunts or uncles, and nephews and nieces, would be too ridiculous." It is afterwards observed, that "the earliest friendships, the friendships which are naturally contracted when the heart is most susceptible of that feeling, are those among brothers and sisters." To this I willingly subscribe; but it does not appear to me so evident, that the fact is sufficiently accounted for by the arguments which follow.

"Their good agreement," continues Dr Smith, "is, while they remain in the same family, necessary for its tranquillity and happiness. They are capable of giving more pleasure or pain to one another, than to the greater part of other people. Their situation renders their mutual sympathy of the utmost importance to their common

happiness." All this, it may be observed, applies with equal force to every description of connexion subsisting between those who are members of the same family. The good agreement of aunts, and uncles, and cousins, and pupils, and friends, when members of the same family, being no less necessary for its tranquillity and happiness, than the good agreement between brothers and sisters.

If this necessity for good agreement, and a consideration of the importance of mutual sympathy, be productive of affection, it must operate alike on all who are convinced of its importance. But this conviction cannot take place, before experience has enlightened the judgment; and therefore at an early age can afford no motive to mutual forbearance, still less to mutual affection. An additional cause is therefore assigned. It is observed, that the same situation, *by obliging them to accommodate*

to one another, renders that sympathy more habitual, and thereby more lively, more distinct, and more determinate." The very circumstance of being compelled to accommodate to one another, may however produce very opposite effects; and will only be found to generate and increase mutual sympathy, according as the attention has been directed to the qualities that are objects of affection. For, let us ask, do brothers and sisters, though brought up under the same roof, always live in perfect harmony, and exhibit decisive proofs of that affection for each other, which, as Dr Smith observes, "is in reality nothing but habitual smypathy?" If we are, as I apprehend we must be, compelled to admit, that there is, in this respect, a great difference to be observed betwixt the children of one family and the children of another, we must infer, that it is not merely by associating together, that fraternal love is to be produced.

When, by the selfishness and folly of parents and nurses, the attention of children is early and habitually directed to objects which afford gratification to the selfish principle; each little heart will be so intent on the gratification of its own self-will, as to regard with jealousy and anger, those by whom it is frequently opposed and thwarted. Its attention will be habitually directed to the petty injuries it receives from the brothers and sisters with whom it is doomed to associate; and thus, whatever, under more judicious management, would have contributed to the joy and amusement of the whole group, is converted into a cause of wrangling, and quarrel, and altercation. How is fraternal affection under such circumstances to have birth? If children who have lived together in infancy, in perpetual discord, exhibit proofs of affection for each other in after life, we should probably, could we trace it to its source, find the affection they pro-

fess, to be indeed no other than a modification of the selfish principle. The idea of the near connexion which subsists between them, binds them to each other, and connects the interests of each with the idea of self, in the breasts of all the brothers and sisters of the same family. They are objects through which the idea of self is enlarged, or through which it may be mortified; and, in the true spirit of party, each considers himself bound to support the other, for the advancement of his own glory. Examples of this are by no means rare. They indeed occur so frequently, that by those who are acquainted with the world, the man would be derided as romantic, who supposed, that the family of a great personage, though known to entertain for him sentiments of contempt and aversion, would not espouse his cause, in preference to the cause of humanity and justice.

We need seek no better proof, that the sympathy which originates in the selfish principle, produces consequences directly opposite to those which are produced by the habitual exercise of the benevolent affections. For the habitual exercise of these pure affections, an ample field is opened within the range of the domestic circle; but if the selfish and vindictive passions have been introduced, they will there likewise have an opportunity of being frequently exercised; and if they obtain ascendency, will render all the advantages naturally resulting from social intercourse abortive.

One or other of these results will follow, according as the parents have directed the attention of their children to objects calculated to excite the tender sympathies of the heart, or to afford gratification to the passions connected with the selfish principle; and this again will depend on the degree in which the propensity to enlarge

the idea of self operates in the parent's bosom. Where the pious and benevolent affections have obtained an ascendency in their hearts, their children will be endeared to each other, by having their attention habitually directed to the happiness they derive from, and communicate to, the associates of their infancy. By attention to their feelings, they will early learn to sympathize in their pains and pleasures; and acquire the invaluable habit of sacrificing or restraining the impulses of self-will, when it interposes with the enjoyment of those in whose happiness they have been taught to participate. Can any one doubt, that the habitual exercise thus given to the affections will not tend to increase their influence, and produce a salutary effect upon the future character? Is it possible to behold a family thus brought up, without feeling an emotion of gratitude to the benign Father of the human race, for having ordained, that in family affection, the purest source of human happiness, a provi-

sion should be made for the diffusion of all those virtues which are essential to the happiness and well-being of society!

Nor is it on the children alone that the result of an early attention to objects of sympathy is productive of beneficial consequences.

"Some feelings are to mortals given
"With less of earth in them than heaven:
"And if there be a human tear,
"From passion's dross refined and clear,
"A tear so limpid and so meek,
"It would not stain an angel's cheek—
"'Tis that which pious fathers shed
"Upon a duteous daughter's head!"*

This effusion of paternal tenderness is the language of a heart in which the affections have been habitually exercised; and, when the most amiable sympathies of the heart are thus habitual, the result is so favourable to the dispositions, that we na-

* Scott. Lady of the Lake.

turally expect of a good father, that he should be a good master, a good neighbour, and a good citizen. Nor would our expectations, if the affections have been really exercised, prove fallacious.

But a man may be very fond of his children, without exercising in that fondness any of the benevolent affections. His fondness for them may, on the contrary, afford exercise to other feelings besides those of pure sympathy and affection; a circumstance that invariably takes place when the selfish principle predominates. In that case we may usually observe, that parental fondness, instead of softening the heart, and rendering it more prone to sympathy, tends to increase the force and operation of the malignant passions. To the effects of these, even the objects of his love are exposed, as often as they create any obstacle to the gratification of the governing propensity. Thus: The man who has been accustomed to view his

daughter, as affording the means of extending the idea of self, by gratifying his vanity, pride, or ambition, exhibits proofs of the most passionate fondness, so long as she is instrumental in promoting the desire of his heart; so long as she promises to gratify his self-love, his attachment continues in force; but no sooner does she threaten to wound the passion that predominates, or refuse to gratify it in the manner he points out, than he is ready to cast her from his heart, and, perhaps, instead of such tears as angels may be supposed to shed, pours on her hapless head a torrent of bitterest imprecations!

If pride be the habitual inmate of his bosom, his resentment will be interminable. His child, in consulting only her own happiness, has snapped asunder the one only tie by which he had been bound to her, and in which all his fondness had originated. From the moment that she ceased to augment the idea of self in his breast, she

ceased to be his. She not only became an alien to his affections, but, as having been the means of diminishing, or of attempting to diminish the idea of self, became the natural object of his hatred.

This is no exaggerated representation of the result of that species of parental love, which is produced, not by attention to the circumstances or qualities that are properly the objects of affection, but to the circumstances and qualities which may be converted into the means of enlarging the idea of self.

In the partial and extravagant fondness which mothers sometimes evince towards their sons, evident marks of the same principle are often visible. Where the love which a mother is supposed invariably to feel for her offspring, arises not from an attention to those circumstances in the infant state, which naturally excite a tender sympathy, but merely from the necessary

connexion of the idea of self with the beings to whom she has given birth, her affection will follow the course of her previous associations, and these will probably lead her to give her sons the preference. By connecting, through the medium of her son, the idea of self with the idea of all the power and glory which she expects him hereafter to enjoy, her notions of self are magnified, and the being who promises her this gratification becomes, of course, the prime object of her attention. This increased attention discovers to her a thousand endearing charms, which seem to her to be peculiar to the child who engrosses all her tenderness, but of which, in reality, he has no greater portion than other children of the same age: But, as belonging to the being with which she has particularly identified herself, these charms are hers; and, in contemplating them, the idea of self dilates so much, as to render the diminution of it excruciating: she therefore shuts her eyes to the faults of her darling, as these could not be seen

or acknowledged without a sensible mortification. She indulges all the passions and caprices of the present moment, not because she is incapable of perceiving the effect produced upon the temper and dispositions, but because her attention is never directed to these, but absorbed in the contemplation of the qualities and properties from which the selfish principle anticipates a complete gratification. Unconscious, however, of the principle by which she is actuated, she ascribes all her indiscreet indulgence to the excess of maternal tenderness, and, by one of the flattering delusions of vanity, persuades herself, that, were all mothers endowed with the same portion of affection, all would, like her, be foolish in their fondness. Nor is it till ingratitude has stung her heart, that she, too late, becomes convinced of her fatal error. This circumstance is finely illustrated in Miss Baillie's tragedy of Rayner, in the scene between the Countess Zaterloo and her son; a scene which I recommend to the

perusal of every mother, who is, like the good old Countess,

"Selfish in her fondness."

Such tragical catastrophes are, happily, in the common course of events, of rare occurrence. But, were the scenes of private life laid open to our view, and the horrors of death-bed remorse exposed to our contemplation, we have little reason to doubt, considering head-strong passions as the natural result of early, senseless, and extreme indulgence, that feelings have sometimes been expressed not unsimilar to those of Zaterloo, who, when overwhelmed by the misery of guilt, exclaims,

"Then cursed be my mother's early cares!
"Would thou had'st lifted up my infant form,
"And dashed it on the stones! I had not lived—
"I had not lived to curse thee for thy pains."

But it is not from the operation of the selfish principle in the minds of parents

only, that children are doomed to suffer: If born to rank and fortune, they are, from their very entrance into the world, beheld as objects that may be rendered subservient to the gratification of that principle in the hearts of all connected with them. The more illustrious their birth, and the more exalted their future destination, so much the more powerfully does the desire to enlarge the idea of self, impel all who have immediate access to their presence, to magnify and extol the beauty, grace, wisdom, &c. of the beings with whom they so readily identify themselves. Thus, princes who happen to die at an early period of life, are always spoken of as prodigies. The flattering eulogium falls harmless on the tomb; but had these wonderful epitomes of virtue and talents lived to reach maturity, the effects produced by flattery would, in all probability, have been evinced in their conduct. The philosopher who informed his illustrious pupil, that there was no royal road to geometry, might have added, that

there was no royal road to any of the virtues of the heart; that the affections of the heart were the result of habitual sympathy, and sympathy the result of attention to qualities naturally productive of emotion.

Whatever be the situation of the individual, the affections that are not thus exercised will have but a feeble influence in his heart, whatever be the pains bestowed on the cultivation of his understanding. It is difficult, on this subject, to convey my sentiments without prolixity; but I have so often observed parents to be prone to place a greater dependence on the future cultivation of the reasoning powers, for counteracting the pernicious effects of present management, that I cannot avoid alluding to the arguments they offer. I shall, however, only request, that they who thus profess to rely on the all-sufficiency of reason, would ask themselves, how far they give proofs of its efficacy, and of its

power to controul the present impulse? Is it according to the dictates of reason to implant and foster by indulgence, passions and dispositions, which, if permitted to "grow with the growth, and strengthen with the strength," must prove inimical to the happiness of the remainder of life? If they, in order to gratify the propensity to self-indulgence, are impelled to act contrary to the dictates of reason, on what ground do they rest their confidence in the power of reason, as being equal to the controul of any habitual inclination in the minds of their children? To the eye of reason, the present moment, or present hour, or present day, must appear what it really is, a trifling portion of the child's existence; and the happiness of it, consequently, of small importance, compared with the happiness of years; even allowing the parent's views of happiness to be confined within the narrow limits of the present life. Let it extend to a state of happiness or misery beyond the grave; that happiness or mise-

ry, to be essentially affected by the nature of the dispositions and affections habitually exercised; and reason will certainly determine, that, admitting the injurious consequences to be only probable, the probability of them must, at all events, far outweigh the gratification of a moment!

But, besides the plea that is founded on a confidence of the all-powerful influence of reason, the plea of feeling will be urged as an ample apology for that injudicious conduct, which, by giving scope to the operations of the selfish principle in the infant mind, prevents the development and growth of the affections. If, however, these feelings should, on examination, appear only to operate in proportion as we have identified ourselves with the object, whose transient uneasiness occasions pain insupportable to our imaginations, the plea must be rejected as founded on selfishness. When parental feelings have this foundation, all ideas of happiness center in self. The happiness

of the child is then out of the question; it is self-indulgence, and self-gratification, that prompts the line of conduct invariably pursued. To give to this the name of love, is a perversion of terms. It is the colouring of self-deceit, and self-delusion. To sacrifice the real and permanent happiness of the child, to the present gratification of the parent, is not love, but cruelty; and such it will appear to every person who has given to the subject a due consideration. Were I to speak from my own feelings, I should confess that I have frequently, on seeing the selfish and vindictive passions produced and cherished in the mind of an infant, by a parent's self-indulgence, experienced sensations very similar to those I should have felt, on witnessing the dislocation of a tender limb, or the administration of a dose of poison.

Examples of this kind, however, do not by any means tend to throw a doubt on the merciful designs of Providence, in ren-

dering the mind, temper, and disposition of the child, in so great a degree dependent on the mind, temper, and disposition of the parent.

Were it not for the ascendency of the selfish principle, that attention to the child which is demanded by its helpless state, would necessarily produce love, and love would as necessarily render a desire of the happiness of the beloved object paramount. When the production of happiness engages the attention, the notion of happiness will not be circumscribed within the narrow limits of the present hour; nor will it fail to enlarge the operation of all the benevolent affections, in the breast of him who is intent on promoting the well-being of creatures, who, however nearly connected with him, have an existence separate and distinct from his. Thus, in parental fondness, as well as in the circumstances of the infant state, has the Almighty Disposer of our destiny ordained an ample provision for the deve-

lopment and cultivation of the affections, on whose pervading and abiding influence the happiness of the individual, and of society, are rendered almost completely dependant.

It is extremely unsentimental to suppose, that parental tenderness can be experienced by any but a parent. But, in inquiries of this nature, facts have more authority than sentiment; and if we refer to these, we shall, from our own individual observation, be furnished with ample proofs, how entirely the feelings of parental tenderness correspond to the degree in which those circumstances and qualities which call it forth in the breasts of parents, have engaged the attention. People may spend their lives among children, without ever having experienced for the infants by whom they are surrounded, one tender emotion, of love, or pity, or hope, or admiration. But this can never happen, when the qualities that naturally excite these emotions have been

objects of attention. It is to the qualities that, by requiring perpetual watchfulness, occasion them perpetual trouble, that the attention of persons who have the care of children is most frequently directed; and by which, if the affections have not been previously cultivated, it will be absorbed. Teachers who have to work against nature, in forcing application at a period when the buoyant spirits cannot easily be controlled, incessantly fix their thoughts on the qualities which present the most formidable obstacles to their views. When this happens, children being considered by the teacher merely as the tools with which he is to work, the implements he is to use for the purpose of obtaining bread, it is superfluous to observe, that the emotions produced from the intercourse will seldom be those of sympathy; and that, consequently, a person of this description may pass his whole life with children, without experiencing in the course of it one feeling of parental tenderness. The teacher may, nevertheless, perform his

duty to the full extent; for though the objects of his care be not to him objects of affection, he may have judgment to discern, and steadiness to persevere in that line of conduct, which tends ultimately to produce in them the best effects. They will in this case suffer far less from the mere absence of affection, than they suffer from that overweaning fondness which originates, not in pure and disinterested love, but in the propensity to magnify the idea of self, by idolizing that with which it is most unequivocally connected. This, however, affords no argument of the inutility of the affections: It only proves, that a defect in sympathy or sensibility does not so certainly prevent the attention from being directed to the end which education is intended to accomplish, as the operation of the selfish principle does. But we are not hence to infer, that those who are intrusted with the care of children, whether servants or teachers, would not in either instance be more competent to the discharge of the

task assigned them, for having their hearts susceptible of a parental tenderness for the objects of their care. By teachers of this description only, can the infant mind receive impressions favourable to the free and full development of all its faculties; for where the sympathies of the heart have not been encouraged to expand, no cultivation of the understanding will have power to render the character eminently great or good.

If a susceptibility of the emotions of affection be thus essential, not only to the parent, but to those who are to assist him in the care and instruction of his offspring, hard indeed would be the fate of *youth*, did tenderness depend solely on instinct. In the animal creation, indeed, the wisdom of the Creator has provided for the preservation of each particular species, by implanting in the parent a powerful instinct, which not only impels to the care and preservation of the infant offspring, but directs, with unerring certainty, to the means by

which it is to be cherished and preserved. When the care of the mother only is requisite, the mother only is endowed with instinctive tenderness; but where, as in many of the feathered tribes, it requires the unremitting assiduity of both parents to procure the necessary aliment for the helpless young, the impulsive instinct is bestowed in an equal degree on both parents. Throughout the whole tribe, or species, the instinct operates with equal force. It has thus operated in each successive generation, from the creation of the species; and will thus continue invariably to operate, till the world itself, and all that it inhabits, shall be dissolved. It will not be asserted, that any thing similar to this is exhibited in the human species.

The appearance of infancy, denoting feebleness that calls for aid, and helplessness that demands protection, is indeed powerfully calculated to excite emotions of compassion and tenderness in the heart

of the spectator; and wherever these affections have any influence, the ideas inspired by the sight of infant innocence will not fail to bring them into action. But when there is a consciousness, that the assistance and protection required by the helpless being is supplied by others, the attention will be cursory, the emotion transient. This is observed to be generally the case with men, as it is but seldom that even the most affectionate father pays much attention to his infant during the first weeks of its existence, nor till it begins to show the first signs of intellect, in taking notice of surrounding objects. He feels, indeed, a consciousness of a sort of extended existence, in the idea of having given life to a new being; and if he be a good man, a circumstance which at once enlarges the sphere of his duties and enjoyments, will not fail to move and dilate his heart. The preservation and safety of his child will be an object of solicitude; but until the infant has been personally an object of at-

tention, it will only be an object of his care and benevolence, not of his individual love.

With the mother the case is far different. The demand it made on her attention before it saw the light, excited sensations of tenderness, which, at first sight of the living being to whom she has given birth, swell to rapture. If she performs, to its full extent, a mother's duty, in the rearing of her infant offspring, her attention to it, during the first weeks of its existence, must be great and unremitting; and this must inevitably give birth to that paramount affection, which we are so apt to consider as an operation of instinct. Supposing both parents to be equally susceptible of affection, we have here a clear demonstration of a cause sufficient to account for the stronger affection of the mother, in the first period of infancy, without having recourse to conjecture, concerning a hidden and mysterious principle, in order to ac-

count for the phenomena. Should any particular event or circumstance alter the situation of the parties, so as to make the care of the infant necessarily devolve upon the father, there is no doubt that the attention thus excited, would produce in him precisely the same effects that we see it produce in the breast of the mother. This is not unfrequent in the lower walks of life; and a particular instance of it occurs to my recollection, attended with circumstances so peculiar, that I shall be pardoned for stating the case in full.

A young man, who had received a good education from respectable parents, (who were cottagers on the estate of a gentleman of my acquaintance,) and bred to the business of a ship-carpenter, married a young woman, to whom he was so much attached, that, not able to bear the thoughts of separation, he would accept of no employment, but on the terms of carrying his wife along with him on the voyage. On

these conditions he was engaged on board a merchantman, I know not for how long a time; but at length it unfortunately happened that his poor wife died in child-bed, on the coast of Africa, from whence the ship was to proceed to America, and he, of course, was obliged to continue with her until the voyage was completed.

His wife expired; but that the new-born infant did not share his mother's fate, may, in such circumstances, seem surprising. There was no female on board to do the offices of nurse; neither was there cow, nor goat, to afford a supply of proper nourishment. But the tender care of the fond father proved sufficient: Nor to him alone was the helpless innocent an object of anxiety. Every sailor on board the vessel participated in his solicitude. The child became an object of attention, and consequently an object of affection, to them all. They contrived, by pounding the hard biscuit, and steeping it in weak grog, to make

a sort of pap, which, if not very delicate, proved, by its effects, to be very nutritious; for the little creature grew, and throve, and prospered. Whatever could be done of the carpenter's work by others, was cheerfully undertaken by his ship-mates; and when he was inevitably engaged on duty, his office of nurse was supplied with diligence and alacrity.

The little nursling, thus fondled and cherished by the honest tars, was, before the end of the voyage, so endeared to their hearts, that, "albeit unused to the melting mood," there was not one among the crew that did not mingle tears with the parting embrace. The father's description of his own feelings were truly affecting, and afforded a convincing proof at what an early period the attention he was compelled to bestow on his child, had produced the yearnings of parental tenderness. He had, however, his reward; for the child, who

was, when I saw him, about four years of age, was uncommonly stout and promising.

But to return from this digression to the ordinary course of the parental affections in amiable characters, who have the wisdom to seek for happiness in the calm enjoyments of domestic life.—Where children are reared under the domestic roof, as soon as the infant acquires sufficient strength to sit up in arms, and exhibits some symptoms of delight on being exercised, or placed within view of objects that attract its notice, it engages a portion of the father's attention, which, as it increases, produces an increase of tender love. The more he indulges in these endearing caresses, and the more vigilantly he attends to all the indications of pain and pleasure, of desire and aversion, in the just dawning mind, the deeper will affection strike root in his heart. It will no longer be of the nature of a transient emotion, but habitual and permanent.

When the two parents are united in heart and in mind, as well as in destiny, the affection to the children must be inevitably enhanced by association; and, by the same association, the attachment to the mutual offspring will augment the force and tenderness of conjugal love. A desire to promote the happiness of the beings in whom the heart is thus interested, will render their happiness a prime object of attention; and the habit of sacrificing to this consideration all the gratifications of the selfish principle, must obviously tend to lessen the influence of the selfish propensity, and impose a perpetual check on its operation.

Thus, in that first law of God, by which man was bound to the partner of his bosom in indissoluble union, we see the first provision made by Providence for counteracting that impulse to enlarge the idea of self, which gives birth to all the evil passions. When the bond is knit in love, each

is to each a second self; but the indulgence thus given to the desire of enlarging that idea only tends, in this instance, to increase the operation of the benevolent affections.

When these affections have their proper influence in the hearts of the wedded pair, their conduct to their offspring will be calculated, not only to develop, but to cherish in them, affections of the same amiable class. The real and permanent happiness of their children being to them a prime object of attention, they will, though at the expense of their present feelings, and at the risk of creating momentary uneasiness to the objects of their love, check the first feeble operations of that propensity, from which all the malignant passions emanate; and thus prepare the heart for the exercise of all those mild and generous affections, which, by the endearments of unremitting tenderness, they have implanted in their infant breasts. If happiness is

to be found on earth, we must look for its residence in such a family of love. Love, not resting on instinct, nor dependant on habitual intercourse, but flowing from habitual attention to qualities that are the natural objects of sympathy and affection.

CHAPTER III.

Consequences of an imperfect cultivation of the affections. Cause of this imperfection investigated. Inefficacy of the sympathy excited through the medium of imagination, exemplified.

HAVING endeavoured to show in what manner the provision made by nature, for the development and cultivation of the affections, may be rendered effectual, or abortive, according as those who govern the infant mind direct its attention to the objects that exercise the affections, or to objects that gratify the selfish principle; I shall now attempt to point out the consequences of that middle course, which, while it tends to strengthen some of the affections, tends also, at the same time, to strengthen the principle whose operations

they were designed to counteract and controul.

If it appears that the affections are on some occasions found to be lively and operative, on others, quite dormant or obtuse, we may conclude, that, like the faculties of the understanding, they may, even when most susceptible of cultivation, be rendered useless to the possessor, and, for want of exercise, become to all intents and purposes extinct. But they also, like the intellectual faculties, may be rendered capable of a partial operation; and the extent to which they operate will, I apprehend, be found very nearly to correspond to the limits within which they have been habitually exercised. To whatever class of the objects of affection the attention has been exclusively directed, no sooner will objects of that particular class be presented to the eye, or to the imagination, than the affection will be excited which it is calculated to call forth; and this, while to other objects of

affection the heart remains cold and insensible. That this does actually take place, is evident to common observation. A mother whose affections of love and tenderness have been cherished by attention to her infant offspring, is expected to feel for other children a greater degree of sympathy than is expected from one whose affections have never thus been exercised. A son or daughter who have had their filial affections exercised by attention to an aged parent, are expected to be moved at sight of the infirmities of age, with feelings of peculiar respect and veneration.

That affections which have been thus exercised may remain in force, even after the heart has in all other respects been seared in vice, and rendered callous by the indulgence of the selfish principle, is a circumstance particularly worthy of our notice, as it affords convincing proof, that it is not by a partial cultivation of the affections, that such effects are produced upon the

heart as are really and permanently beneficial.

Shakspeare has exhibited a fine example of the influence which certain associations of affection may continue to maintain over the most hardened heart, in the character of Lady Macbeth, who, at the very moment that she seems dead to every feeling of humanity, and plunges remorseless into the depth of guilt, is withheld by one of these compunctious visitings of affection, from committing murder with her own hand.

——— "Had he not resembled
"My father as he slept, I had done't."*

Numerous illustrations of similar import might be presented from the scenes of real life, all tending to prove, that where the affections have not in early life been fully developed, and have been no farther culti-

* MACBETH, Act 2.

vated than by attention to one class of the objects of sympathy, they will have no conspicuous operation, except with regard to objects of that particular class.

The warmest feelings of affection towards one's family and connexions, does not preclude the exercise of all the benevolent affections on a wider circle, but quite the reverse; for the affections are in their nature expansive, and, when duly cultivated, will act with facility and certainty on every object placed within the sphere of their operations.

That it is in the domestic circle, and during that period of life when the heart is most susceptible of tender impressions, that they are cultivated to most advantage, may be safely asserted; as I doubt whether a single instance can be produced of their obtaining any other than a partial influence on the heart, where they have first been exercised on objects remote, or of a nature

that precludes all reciprocation of sympathy. When attention has been directed to the general weal, or to the interests of any particular class or description of human beings, before it has been engaged in studying to promote the happiness of the individuals, with whom, as associates, there must of course be constant intercourse, there is very little chance, whatever appearance of benevolence may be thus exhibited, that the benevolent affections, which have thus commenced their operations on the grand scale of general utility, will influence the conduct; and be habitually exercised on the narrower, but not less important sphere, of private life. By attention to circumstances which affect the happiness of nations, an ardent desire of righting the wrongs and redressing the grievances destructive of national happiness, may be produced. But it by no means follows, that this righter of wrongs and redresser of grievances will inevitably evince benevolence towards his children,

tenants, and domestics; for the circumstances which affect their happiness, may never have obtained from him a moment's consideration. It may, on the other hand, be observed, that, in some instances, it is to these near objects that benevolence is entirely confined. Persons so devoid of every generous feeling, as to be utterly incapable of receiving any impression of pain or pleasure from events in which the happiness of millions of their fellow-creatures is deeply implicated, evincing at the same time no small portion of zeal in promoting the happiness of their near and dear connexions. Persons of this description love their families with exclusive love. They are alive to what concerns their happiness, because their happiness has been to them a primary object of attention; and if their sphere of action be very narrow, they may be thought in this limited exercise of their affections, to have merited the highest approbation. But in persons, who, from their rank and influence, have it in their power to produce

good and evil on an extensive scale, benevolence that never extends beyond the domestic circle, ceases to be praise-worthy, and even becomes in some degree pernicious; for so little are the generality of mankind accustomed to analyze or to discriminate, that when they observe the same person, who shows the tenderest affection to his wife, and children, and connexions, exhibiting proofs of cruelty or hardness of heart to all but the favoured few, they learn to associate with filial, conjugal, and paternal tenderness, ideas of contempt, and to consider this natural exercise of the benevolent affections as in some measure destructive of that more enlarged benevolence, which gives the heart an interest in the happiness of all that live.

This mistake is, I am afraid, very commonly made by the young and unthinking, and is productive of very fatal consequences. I doubt, indeed, whether there be any error more fatal, than that of suppos-

ing that the love of our families, and of the near relations with whom we habitually associate, is in every instance no other than a modification of the selfish principle; and that consequently our benevolence is only to be proved by the degree in which it operates on distant objects. In consequence of this erroneous notion, the affections, instead of being cultivated by attention to their proper objects, are cultivated through the medium of imagination, and never warmed into action until fancy has arrayed the object in her own illusive colours. Hence arises most of those apparent inconsistencies in conduct, which at first view strike us as wholly unaccountable.

To desire the happiness of those we love, seems to be naturally the result of the feelings we cherish towards them; but if our attention has not been habitually directed to the feelings of others, the means through

which their happiness is to be promoted will escape our observation. Hence persons in whose hearts the sympathetic and generous affections do not cease to glow, are nevertheless seen to give almost perpetual cause of uneasiness, perhaps of misery, to those they most dearly love. But though sincerely and ardently desirous that happiness should be enjoyed by those with whom they are connected in domestic life, they perceive not in what a degree their conduct tends to defeat that object; and though willing to make all other sacrifices, never sacrifice those trifles which present the most effectual obstacle to the felicity they would die to secure. This is doubtless, in some instances, the result of an indulgence of the selfish principle; but is frequently the result of that habitual want of attention to those minute circumstances, which, though trifling in the detail, constitute in the aggregate so large a portion of the sum of individual happiness.

When we speak in praise of a good man's conduct, it is usual to say, that the benevolence of his heart, his compassionate and charitable temper, renders him attentive to the sufferings of the poor, and the distresses of the afflicted. According to my view of the subject, we should speak more correctly by saying, that his attention to the sufferings of the poor and afflicted had given activity to the feelings of compassion and benevolence. Attention to the description of certain calamitous circumstances might have enabled him to form such a lively conception of the misery of the sufferers, as to have excited the feelings of pity, and, by the workings of imagination, have even produced all the emotions of tender sympathy and heart-felt sorrow. But if to the pictures of imagination his attention had been exclusively directed, his desire of affording relief to the distressed objects would be gratified through the same medium, and in imagining the good of his fellow-creatures, he would have been

amply solaced for all the painful sympathy the idea of misery had occasioned.

When the tender sympathies have been cultivated through the medium of imagination, the sight of distress is sometimes too painful to be endured, and is therefore carefully avoided by persons of extraordinary sensibility. Hence some philosophers have been led to conclude, that our sensations on witnessing any species of bodily suffering, is the result of an exercise of the imagination, by which we have placed ourselves in the situation of the sufferer, and made his case our own. But I confess this does not appear to me to be consonant to experience. The objects on which imagination exercises its powers, have all been previously the objects of attention; and quickly as they are combined by imagination, these very combinations must again become objects of attention, before they are productive of emotion; and the longer the mind dwells upon these images of its own

creation, the greater and more durable the emotion.

A paragraph in a London newspaper, giving an account of a destructive fire then raging with great violence in a part of the town where I have no acquaintance, may excite in me considerable emotion. I, in this instance, by an effort of imagination, place myself in the situation of the sufferers, and make their case my own. By figuring to myself the excess of terror, perturbation and anxiety, necessarily occasioned by such a calamitous event, I may bring myself to participate, in some degree, in all their feelings. But this can only be done when the mind is unoccupied by other objects, and is, therefore, at liberty to bestow on these combinations of imagination, an undivided attention. Accordingly we may observe, that persons who have been habitually occupied on the present and immediate objects of perception, and over whose minds imagination has little influence, ex-

hibit scarcely any tokens of sympathy in hearing of calamities that have taken place at any considerable distance, even when they are, by experience, qualified to judge of the degree of pain they have occasioned, and are thus enabled to place themselves in the situation of the sufferer. Their conception of the case may be sufficiently clear; but they have been so little accustomed to attend to the objects which exercise that faculty, that the attention casually given to such objects, is too feeble to be productive of any sensible emotion.

The emotions of sympathy produced by an exercise of the imagination, to whatever degree they may, by minds possessed of sensibility, be experienced, as they do not invariably impel to action, are too precarious to be depended on as a certain means of exciting attention to the feelings of that which suffers, so as irresistibly to prompt to its relief.

In the organization of the human frame a remedy is provided for this defect. No sooner is the suffering of any sentient being made known to us through our own organs of perception, than the painful sensation immediately produced is found to be compulsory, forcing us to pay that attention to the sufferer, which, in many cases, proves effectual to the preservation of its life, or to the alleviation of its misery. That the sensation in this case differs, not only in degree, but in kind, from the emotion in the former, we may be convinced by referring to our own experience.

Let us compare our sensations on seeing a moth fly into the flame of a taper burning before us, with our emotions when excited by an effort of imagination on the description of sufferings of a similar kind, and we shall quickly perceive, that they are totally different.

The incident which led me first to make the distinction, will serve to illustrate the foregoing observations. It happened some years ago at the representation of the tragedy of Jane Shore, at Drury-lane theatre; and as the unfortunate victim of royal love was that night personated by Mrs Siddons, it is needless to add, that by her incomparable powers the imagination was so powerfully influenced, as to give a momentary reality to the mournful scene. Just at the moment when our sympathy was wound to the extreme, when every heart was touched with pity, and every eye suffused with tears of commiseration, the man who personated the porter of Alicia, by a sudden dash, shut the heavy door against the forlorn supplicant, and in doing so crushed the fingers of the actress, which had been unwittingly placed in the door-frame. The shriek of pain naturally produced by the accident, electrified every nerve of the spectators. Jane Shore and her woes were instantly forgotten: the sensation occasion-

ed by what Mrs Siddons was known to suffer, annihilated all the sympathies of imagination, and so completely occupied the mind and engrossed its feelings, that when, after a painful interval, she again appeared, making an effort to resume her part, no one could bear to witness the exertion. She, however, went on: but I believe there was not in the crowded audience a single individual who gave a tear to the mournful death of Shore; the apprehension that Mrs Siddons would increase the pain she suffered in the wounded hand, exciting sensations by which all other feelings were absorbed, excepting perhaps admiration of the fortitude which gave the character of heroism to the effort.

The question that immediately occurs, is, Was our sympathy with the miseries of Jane Shore, and our sympathy with the suffering experienced by Mrs Siddons, produced alike by an operation of the imagination? If so, if the sympathetic emo-

tion was in both instances excited by placing ourselves in the situation of the sufferer, why did not the idea of enduring the agonies of a painful death, excite sensations of a nature more poignant than the idea of enduring the comparatively trifling anguish arising from a bruised or fractured finger?

If the sympathy produced by an exercise of the imagination, is not accompanied by any physical sensation, and the sympathy produced by the immediate perception of the suffering object, is accompanied by such sensation, we have at once a clear solution of the difficulty. In support of this argument it may be farther observed, that the emotions of sympathy may, by a lively imagination, be produced at pleasure, being invariably consequent on pursuing certain trains of thought: But over our sensations we possess no similar power; we can neither excite them by an effort of imagination, nor can we destroy them by any effort

of the will. Of their use in stimulating the attention, and imperatively directing it to the suffering object, there can be no question: And in this they bear a striking relation to the provision made by the beneficent Creator in the structure of the human frame, for emitting certain sounds indicative of the weakness that requires assistance, or of the pains which demand relief. The feeble whimperings of helpless infancy, the moanings of sickness, the shrieks of pain or terror, are signals of suffering, immediately producing sensations in those who hear them of such a painful nature, as to be compulsatory in producing the desire of affording relief or assistance to the suffering object. In having excited the attention towards the object, they have fulfilled the purpose for which they were designed by Providence; and having fulfilled it, their operation ceases. Nor is the wisdom of the Deity less conspicuous in having so ordered it, that continued or repeated attention, which in every other in-

stance increases the influence or operation of a passion or emotion, should in this instance have a quite contrary tendency. Were the pain arising from the sight of bodily sufferings to increase in exact proportion to the degree of attention bestowed, the human race would perish. No one could bring himself to study the healing art; the sick man's couch would be deserted even by his friends; and the animals given for the food of man would never be slain for his sustenance.

If the impulse which powerfully directs our attention towards the distressed object were an operation of imagination, the general laws with regard to the power of attention in augmenting the influence of imagination, must in this instance be suspended or reversed. By confining attention to our own sensations, they may indeed be prolonged beyond the period assigned them by nature: and this does sometimes actually happen in selfish minds,

when they pretend to the glory of extraordinary sensibility. But, according to the wiser decree of nature, the sensation is short-lived, existing no longer than it is useful. From the moment that attention is directed towards the means of alleviating the pain of the suffering object, it becomes extinct; and thus, by one of those beautiful contrivances of nature, which are no less conspicuous in the structure of the mind than in the organization of the body, we, by those exertions to relieve our fellow-creatures, which produce a mitigation of their sufferings, most effectually relieve ourselves from the pain of the sensations occasioned by witnessing them.

I am particularly anxious to enforce this argument on my female readers, as, from erroneous notions concerning the nature of sensibility, women frequently permit their attention to be so engrossed by their own sensations, as not only unnecessarily to prolong their pain, but to pre-

vent their being of use to others on sudden emergencies, or in circumstances that greatly affect their feelings. On such occasions it may be of great advantage to recollect, that they have it in their power, by directing their attention towards the means by which relief may be administered to the sufferer, not only to sooth or to remove his pain, but effectually to relieve their own.

To show how completely every feeling may be absorbed by this operation of attention, I shall take the liberty of inserting an anecdote, which was related to me by a person of unquestionable veracity.

An officer, who had the misfortune of being severely wounded in one of the first engagements that took place in the late war, notwithstanding all that could be done for him by the most eminent surgeons in London, continued to suffer such excru-

ciating pain, as obliged him to give up the service, and go home to his friends.

In this remote situation he was attended by a very young practitioner, who, devoting his attention to the case, declared his belief, that a piece of the leather of the belt had been carried by the ball into the shoulder-blade, from whence it might be extricated by an operation. The patient, not having sufficient confidence in his skill, consulted higher authority, and in consequence rejected the proposal; till at length, worn out by suffering, he consented in despair to try the remedy proposed. The young surgeon, whose character and success in life were deeply interested in the event, performed the operation with complete success; and having triumphantly produced the fragment which had occasioned so much torture, began to compliment his patient on the fortitude he had displayed during the application of the instrument, as he had not heard him utter

the slightest groan. The attendants could scarcely forbear smiling at the speech, as they well knew that the piercing shrieks uttered by the sufferer were so loud, as to have been heard at some furlongs distance. —So completely, in this instance, had the attention of the operator been occupied on the object to which it was directed, as to absorb all the powers of perception! Let us suppose a mother or sister to have been in the next room, and however deeply they might be interested in the success of the operation, their attention to the feelings of the sufferer would, doubtless, render the indication of these feelings productive of sensations intolerably painful: So painful, indeed, that to those who witnessed them they might appear to demand as much sympathy as the poor young man by whose sufferings they were occasioned.

The degree in which they experienced these sensations, on listening to the shrieks of pain, would not, however, have been a

just criterion whereby to judge of the habitual influence of the benevolent affections in their hearts; and as it is in proportion to the degree in which they habitually operate, that we possess the character of virtue, of which benevolence is the essential constituent, it is of importance to mark the distinction.

The benevolent affections produce in us a desire to augment the happiness, and to relieve the miseries of our fellow-creatures; but if our attention be not directed to the means of doing either, our fellow-creatures will reap no benefit from our benevolence: It will be no other than a fruitless exercise of the imagination. Even though our sympathy in the feelings of others should be productive of the strongest emotions, these emotions, if they do not prompt us to active exertion, though they may be of the benevolent class, do not entitle us to be denominated benevolent. And as, when the sympathetic affections are cultivated

through the medium of imagination, they are seldom operative, it follows, that it is not by directing attention to the combinations of imagination, that real benevolence is to be produced.

By directing our attention to the means of affording relief to the distressed, our sympathetic emotions are diminished; we thereby apparently become less tender, or, in fashionable phraseology, less amiable: but these emotions may well be dispensed with, if they give place to habits that are pleasing to God, and beneficial to our fellow-creatures.

I cannot better illustrate this observation, than in the conduct of Howard. It was doubtless by an emotion of sympathy that his attention was first directed to the sufferings of those, who, through crime or misfortune, are doomed to languish within the walls of a prison. In contemplating their situation, the feelings of pity and

compassion were excited and exercised: but it was not to that class of objects with which these feelings are connected, that his views were limited; for as benevolence was in his breast not a passive but an active principle, it directed his thoughts towards the means of mitigating the sufferings which had, in the first instance, been the sole object of his attention. Sensible that it was not by a superficial knowledge of the situation and sufferings of those unhappy persons whose cause he was inclined to advocate, that he could do any thing towards effecting their relief, he devoted his whole mind, his whole time, in short, *his whole attention*, to those inquiries by which alone he could become master of the subject; and as, when attention is undividedly given to any one object, it necessarily increases the force of the affections which the object is calculated to excite, (though it diminishes the sensations that accompany them), we cannot doubt that the benevolence of Howard was progres-

sive, increasing day by day as he proceeded in his glorious course.

From several passages in the writings of Sterne, it appears that he also had had his attention directed to the miseries of the captive; but it was to his own conceptions of their feelings and sufferings that his attention was chiefly turned. From those conceptions his lively imagination formed the affecting pictures which are so generally admired, and which, not improbably, drew tears from the author's eyes while he pourtrayed them. But here the effect ceased. The attention having been habitually directed to the vivid creations of his own fancy, it was the contemplation of those images, and not the real sufferings of his fellow-creatures, that excited emotion in his breast. Benevolence was consequently in him a passive, and not an operative principle.

Sterne's description of the captive has drawn sighs from many a fair bosom, whose tranquillity has never been perceptibly disturbed on reading a list of the unhappy numbers, who, through no crime but poverty, are at the present moment suffering all the rigours of confinement. But let her, by an impulse of benevolence, take such an interest in one of these unfortunate persons, as shall lead her to visit the abode of misery;—Let her, with the intention of bestowing relief, explore those regions which have, in description, so powerfully affected her imagination;—Let her

"Behold the horrors of the gloomy jail,
"Unpitied and unheard where misery moans;
"Where sickness pines, where thirst and hunger burns,
"And poor misfortune feels the lash of vice."

And, when her emotions have sufficiently subsided to become objects of reflection, let her compare them with those which imagination called forth, and she will

quickly be sensible that they were of a different class.

The painful sensations occasioned by an actual survey of the state of wretchedness, will either impel her to give an increased degree of attention to such objects, and to the means of procuring them relief, or it will lead her for ever to avoid them, and even to drive them from her thoughts. Which of these effects are most likely to follow, will depend entirely on the nature of her previous habits of attention; for according to these her sensibility will have been exercised, on the creations of fancy, or on the real objects of affection: the former producing passive, the latter producing active benevolence.

When the generous and tender affections have been habitually exercised through the medium of the imagination, they are generally merely passive. The emotions thus excited are so far from being of a painful

nature, that they are indulged in as delightful, and indeed constitute one of the purest luxuries to persons of exquisite sensibility; but it is not by indulging in them that the benevolence is produced which assumes the form of an operative and active principle.

Amiable persons have therefore no right to give themselves credit for benevolence, on account of their extreme susceptibility of benevolent impressions; for it is not merely in willing, but in promoting the happiness of our fellow-creatures, that genuine benevolence consists. Neither is it according to the vividness and strength of the emotion, but according to the constancy of its operation, that we ought to judge of the benevolence either of ourselves or others.

Persons of ardent sensibility are powerfully affected by every picture of distress; but it has been already shown, that if this

emotion incites to a consideration of the means of affording relief to the distressed object, it has fully performed the office for which nature intended it; and that it decreases in proportion as attention is thus engaged. If attention be frequently thus engaged, a consideration of the means of relieving distress will become a habit of the mind; and thus, as has been observed by one of the wisest and most convincing of reasoners, "Active habits may be gradually forming and strengthening, by a course of acting upon such and such motives and excitements, whilst these motives and excitements themselves are, by proportionable degrees, less and less sensibly felt." In illustration of this truth the excellent author observes as follows: "Perception of distress in others, is a natural excitement passively to pity, and actively to relieve it; but let a man set himself to attend to, inquire out, and relieve distressed persons, and he cannot but grow less and less sensibly affected with the va-

rious miseries of life with which he must become acquainted; when yet, at the same time, benevolence, considered not as a passion but as a practical principle of action, will strengthen; and, whilst he passively compassionates the distressed less, he will acquire a greater aptitude actively to assist and befriend them."*

The inference that naturally arises from these considerations is conclusive, and obviously supports and confirms all that I have adduced to prove, that the sensibility which has originated in, and been nourished by attention to objects presented to the imagination, is entirely foreign, and utterly distinct from that sympathetic benevolence which is the genuine offspring of cultivated affections. This species of sensibility may consequently be indulged to the utmost, without diminishing the influence of the selfish principle. It has indeed a con-

* BUTLER'S Analogy.

trary tendency, and may easily be converted into a mean of enlarging the idea of self. In the minds of the vain it will be displayed and gloried in, in order to produce the admiration by which vanity is gratified and increased; and in the minds of the proud, augment the idea of internal superiority, by the consciousness of being, in sensibility as well as in other respects, superior to the vulgar; but it will never in the breasts of either produce that beneficence which leads to charity and mercy.

CHAPTER IV.

Imperfect operation of benevolence exemplified in palliating vice. False sentiment; its effects illustrated. Compassion to animals. Source of that tenderness, when partial, and confined to objects of any particular class.

As there is a species of sensibility, which may be indulged without producing the benevolence which can alone effectually improve the heart, by counteracting the propensity to magnify the idea of self, so is there likewise a species of sympathy, which, though it prompts to active exertion, is, from its mode of operation, no less useless than the former. Both are to be ascribed to the same cause, and equally originate in that partial development and imperfect cultivation of the affections,

which permits the selfish principle to controul their operations.

Where the affections have been duly cultivated, the heart will naturally sympathize in the pleasures and pains of every creature susceptible of pain or pleasure. When the affections have been but partially cultivated, sympathy will operate partially, and will be found only to operate on that class of objects which have particularly engaged the attention. Now, let us observe in how small a degree this operation of sympathy tends to lessen the influence of the selfish principle in the heart.

It may, in the first place, be proper to remark, that where sympathy is confined to certain classes of our fellow-creatures, or to certain circumstances in their situation, though, when such objects are presented, it should operate even in the extreme, it is not thence entitled to the character of benevolence. If we

sympathize only in the pleasures and pains of the rich and powerful, there is great reason to apprehend, that it is because we have identified ourselves with that particular class. Such sympathy is evidently a gratification of the selfish principle. The same may be observed with regard to the sympathy that is circumscribed within the limits of our own family, our own party, or our own sect; for with all these the idea of self may be connected.

But, not only may sympathy be limited to certain descriptions of persons, it may also be limited to one particular species of suffering or enjoyment. Thus, there are persons generally denominated *good* and *charitable*, who feel deeply for the misery of poverty, and who, consequently, exert themselves to clothe the naked and feed the hungry; but, having provided for the necessities of the body, are utterly careless with regard to the miseries they inflict, or

perceive to be inflicted on the mind. They seem incapable of sympathizing in any pains but those of cold and hunger; and, provided those who depend on them for comfort, have nothing in that way to complain of, they think they may with impunity inflict a thousand wounds upon the heart, and consider the slightest symptom of sensibility to the wounds they thus inflict, as proofs of ingratitude, heinous and unpardonable. For the feelings of a wounded spirit, their sympathy affords no balm; for the sick at heart, their repositories afford no cordial. What then avails their boasted liberality? Have we not a right to pronounce of such partial benevolence, that it is of the nature of that which the apostle had in view, when he declares, "that though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing!"*

* 1 Cor. ch. xiii.

But, on the other hand, sympathy may be equally partial, and consequently equally inefficient, though powerfully operating where the last mentioned species of sympathy has been seen to fail. In this instance, it is the mental miseries alone that are the objects of sympathy, and of these, particular classes are singled out for the peculiar exercise of the benevolent affections. In selecting these, we may frequently observe much of the caprice of vanity, and much of the folly of affectation; but shall invariably find, that the feelings displayed are gloried in, as forming a badge of distinction peculiarly belonging to that description of persons, with which the person whose boast they are, is in her own fancy identified.

Thus it has been with some the fashion to sympathize only with the misery arising from a state of dependence or depression. Such are supposed to have a right to murmur at the decrees of Providence; to re-

gard with envy and malevolence the prosperous and the rich; and to resent every indication of self-complacency in their superiors as an insult. While sympathy with these feelings remained in vogue, our novels teemed with sentimental sempstresses and waiting-maids, whose hard lot it was to be obliged to work for most unsentimental dames, the favourites of fortune, and of course proud, capricious, and obdurate. The hero of the tale might be above the rank of a footman; but, in order to excite sympathy, it was absolutely necessary that he should be poor and dependent, and receive injuries innumerable from the rich and unfeeling, on account of his superior virtues, of which honest and patient industry could not, according to the laws of sentiment, form a conspicuous part. As his unconquerable pride was intended to be the object of our admiration, it was in the feelings resulting from pride that we were, in these ill-imagined fictions, taught to sympathize: and this species of sympathy was,

while the fashion lasted, deemed an ample substitute for that benevolence which purifies the heart from partiality and hypocrisy, which, embracing with equal charity all ranks and conditions in society, continually "doeth good, and upbraideth not."

Very different is the result of that partial benevolence, in every operation of which the idea of self perpetually mingles. Of this, considering the subject of importance to young persons, who are apt to be dazzled by the glare of false sentiment, some farther illustrations may with propriety be introduced.

As vice is the object of moral disapprobation and abhorrence, and, according to the authority of the religion we profess, exposes the impenitent sinner to the penalty of everlasting perdition, the vicious are certainly the proper objects of our compassion; nor can a truly benevolent mind consider their unhappy state, without feelings of pity and commiseration.

But benevolence of the partial and imperfect species has no such general operation. It singles out a particular description of the vicious as the objects of peculiar sympathy, and, by that sympathy, instead of increasing our abhorrence at vice in general, seeks to veil its enormity, that our disapprobation may in this particular instance be withheld.

How far such sympathy is influenced by the selfish principle, will appear evident, if, as I believe to be generally the case, the objects of it are to be found in that description of persons with whom we seek to identify ourselves. Thus, young men who pique themselves on what they call spirit, consider the crime of murder, under certain circumstances, not merely as a venial offence, but as a proof of gallantry and valour. The murderer is the object, not of their pity and compassion on account of the guilt he had contracted, but the object of their sympathy, perhaps of their envy

and admiration. The operation of the selfish principle, in this perversion of judgment, is too obvious to escape detection.

But it will perhaps be more difficult to convince the sentimental reader of the other sex, that in all the sympathetic tenderness she expresses for the *amiable unfortunates*, who have, by guilt of another description, rendered themselves amenable to the laws of God and man, she gives a similar indulgence to the same propensity. Such, nevertheless, is the real fact. While this particular mode of sympathy is the distinguishing characteristic of a certain class of sentimentalists, she, by adopting it, identifies herself with that particular class, and expects to share in the praise and admiration so generally bestowed on an excess of refinement and sensibility.

As far as virtue is essentially beneficial to the happiness of society, so far does this fashionable sentimentality prove injurious:

and I verily believe it has done more towards lessening the love of virtue and the abhorrence of vice, than ever was effected by the propagation of the most decidedly flagitious principles that have at any time been openly avowed or inculcated.

The woman who has broken her most sacred vows, deserted her most sacred duties, and renounced all those obligations, which, as a Christian, a wife, a mother, a member of society, she was bound to fulfil, is indeed, and truly, an object of pity; for though by penitence she may obtain forgiveness of God, who sees the heart, and knows whether the penitence be sincere, she is, *without repentance*, in the state of a criminal on whom sentence has been pronounced, but who, though offers of pardon are held forth, spurns the proffered mercy of his offended Judge. A person in this state ought, indeed, to be commiserated, and from the horrors of this state she ought if possible to be relieved. But what

is the relief which her circumstances call for?—Relief from the bondage of sin and guilt: Relief from the thraldom of passions which have sunk her into the gulf of infamy; and from the false notions and opinions which have paved the way from error to the dominions of vice. Where such relief can be effected, pure and active benevolence will not be slow to the performance of the charitable deed.

But of what nature is the relief which sentimental sympathy in this instance proposes to afford? It proposes, by palliating the offence, to relieve the guilty from those stings of remorse, which might lead to that repentance by which the heavier part of the penalty can alone be obviated. It proposes to reconcile the sinner to herself, and to reconcile the world to her conduct; thereby endeavouring to relieve all who are impelled by irregular desires, from the restraints which a respect for the opinions of society have a tendency to impose, even

when respect to principles of higher authority have lost all influence. By the sympathy thus given to the guilty, numbers are precipitated into guilt. The general good is thus sacrificed to a few worthless individuals. In order that they may appear with undiminished eclat in that society which they have, by their conduct, renounced, and their place in which they have deservedly, and ought to have irretrievably, forfeited, the boundaries between vice and virtue are broken down, and the good and bad placed upon a level, and admitted to an equal share of external respect, and honoured with an equal share of attention.

But even where this *excess of charity* has not as yet become so fashionable as to annihilate the distinction between vice and virtue, so completely as would be agreeable to the depraved; from the daily increasing prevalence of that false sentiment which has become the substitute of pure benevo-

lence, we may infer, that the period is not far distant when the adulteress and chaste matron will be universally received upon equal terms. Nay, not upon equal terms; for where vice, under the endearing appellation of *frailty*, has been singled out as the object of sympathy, it is to the guilty that the attention will of course be most powerfully attracted. "Who could withhold their admiration from a creature so interesting! With manners so fascinating! So irresistibly charming! She did not act *quite right*, it is true; but then it was impossible she could love her husband, he is such a sad brute, and she is so amiable!" From such colloquies, the woman who has no higher principle than respect for public opinion, cannot fail to have her mind gradually reconciled to vice, which thus, even among the virtuous, finds advocates and admirers.

When we consider to what a multitude public opinion affords the highest motive

to action of which they are capable, we can be at no loss to conjecture what will follow the removal of all those restraints which public opinion has, in this country at least, continued hitherto to impose. But it is with no intention, with no desire to remove these restraints, that indulgence is at first given to that tender sympathy in the misfortunes of the fallen, which eventually leads to their removal. It is merely from the desire of magnifying the idea of self, that such as have been taught to consider exquisite sensibility as the object of admiration, are impelled to display sensibility in a manner differing from that in which it is generally displayed by persons who have no pretensions, and which consequently marks their superiority in refinement.

To feel for those who are afflicted, as all may be afflicted; to endeavour to sooth by sympathy, those wounds which sympathy may alleviate, is only to perform what

plain people deem a duty. But to sympathize in the indignant feelings of those whom the opinion of society has doomed to the punishment of disgrace; by sympathy to mitigate these feelings, and, if possible, avert the punishment; is to prove, that their notions of what is amiable, and tender, and generous, is formed on other principles than those by which common minds are influenced. It is to prove, that they belong to a superior class, and have a right to claim affinity with those whose exquisite susceptibility has been the theme of admiration to their companions or friends.

The approbation bestowed on this species of tender compassion, and generous liberality of sentiment, affords a convenient shelter to persons of an opposite description, who, in the ardent desire to identify themselves with a certain rank, are extremely willing to overlook the crimes by which any who belong to that favoured

class are sullied. By adopting the cant of sentiment, such persons, however strict their own conduct, apologize to themselves for continuing that connexion with honourable and right honourable delinquents, of which they would in every other case most highly disapprove. In order to strengthen the connexion by which they are in their own opinions exalted, all the influence they possess in society is exerted in behalf of those who have forfeited all claim to its esteem; and in proportion as they succeed, applaud themselves on their benevolence! —How justly,—those who take a comprehensive view of the interests of society will determine.

Hoping that the importance of the subject will be accepted as an excuse for the length of the digression, I shall yet advert to another instance, in which sympathy, with sentiments apparently generous, is made the nourisher of self-admiration. I have in a former Chapter had occasion to

observe, that those who, instead of extending their views to the interest of the species, or of that part of it which constitutes the society with which they are connected, consider only the interest of the sex with which they are identified, necessarily judge of that interest by a partial standard. They advocate not the cause of virtue, but of their sex. They stand forth the champions, not of justice and mercy, but of claims and pretensions to privileges and immunities, from which they imagine it a grievance to be excluded. In so doing, they applaud in themselves the noble impulse of generosity by which they are, as they imagine, actuated. But of what nature are the grievances of which women who plead the cause of their sex so loudly complain? Is it, that they are placed by Providence in circumstances by which the sphere of their duties is unavoidably circumscribed? As this plea for discontent can only be urged by those who have no faith in the word of Him who has promised

to the performance of duty its appropriate reward, it has only been resorted to by those who wish to obtain the glory of being identified with infidels of a certain school. Whenever it has been openly avowed, the consequent actions have afforded the most ample comment on its absurdity. But even by those who do not deplore themselves as unfortunate, because they are precluded by their sex from fighting the battles of their country in the glorious field of war, or from exerting their talents at the bar, or in the senate, sentiments have been adopted, which lead to perpetual comparisons between the circumstances in which the sexes are relatively placed, tending to prove, that that with which they are identified are the victims of injustice. Their bosoms are fired with a generous indignation when they observe, that different as are the circumstances in which they are placed, public opinion with respect to their conduct also differs; women being excluded from society for the com-

mission of the very same offences of which men may be guilty with impunity. This heinous injustice is considered as the offspring of a more heinous partiality. Why should not the punishment of all offences against morality be equally dealt? Why should the weaker be doomed to suffer that disgrace, from which the stronger is in some measure exempted?

Before answering this question we should beg those who reason in this manner to inquire, of what nature is the punishment of which they complain; and by whom is it awarded? The loss of public favour is the penalty, and by the public voice (that is, by the common sense of mankind) that penalty has been imposed on that party by whose misconduct the laws of society are most openly outraged, and the happiness of society most deeply wounded. The offence against religion and morality is here out of the question. It is a consideration, however serious, of a nature

totally separate and distinct. Public opinion, though a respectable tribunal, is not the highest nor the last tribunal at which those who offend the laws of religion and morality are to appear; and if by its sanctions a greater restraint is imposed on one sex than upon the other, with regard to the commission of crimes for which both are at the last tribunal to account, it is surely not for the sex that reaps the advantage to complain!

That murmurs of this sort do not proceed either from a superior regard to virtue, or from pure benevolence, is evident from the conduct of those who resent the apparent injustice of public opinion as an injury to the sex. In how few instances do they exert their influence in society, to lead public opinion to extend its restraints to the other sex, by openly discountenancing those who notoriously offend! If, instead of shutting their doors against profligates of either sex, they open them to profligates

of both sexes, their tender mercies to individuals is cruelty to the aggregate: they may pique themselves on being the champions of their sex, but they are the enemies of society.

Many instances yet remain to be produced, in proof of the inutility of that partial operation of the sympathetic affections, originating in their imperfect cultivation. I shall not however trespass on the reader's patience by enumerating them, but only beg leave cursorily to glance at that species of benevolence, which selects certain classes of the animal creation as the objects of its peculiar and exclusive sympathy.

To the sufferings of any sentient being no benevolent heart can be indifferent. When such suffering is presented to the attention, with the sympathy excited, a desire to relieve the sufferer will also be excited; and when this relief is practical, it will, by those in whom benevolence is not

a passive but an active principle, be promptly and effectually bestowed. But when the glory accruing from sensibility is in contemplation, a certain description of suffering will, for reasons before explained, be singled out for the display of that sensibility, and the extent of the suffering be computed by the precarious and ever-varying standard of imagination.

Among the many anecdotes related of a certain Irish gentleman, celebrated in the annals of duelling, it is told, that though not remarkable for the indulgence of the tender sympathies in any other instance, his compassion towards horses was carried to such an extravagant extreme, as put the poor farmers in his own territories to no small inconvenience. Exercising over them the despotic authority with which custom had invested him, he permitted no car to carry more than half the usual load; and, even when his commands had been strictly complied with, frequently stopped them on

the road, and obliged the poor car-men to relieve the horses, by taking half of the burden on their backs! Meeting one day with a lad whom he knew to be lame, riding a wretched horse, and, contrary to the great man's orders, riding at a round trot, he made his servant seize the delinquent, who stated in his defence the urgency of the occasion, which was no other than that of going for the *sage femme* to a village at some miles distant. In vain did he plead the fatal consequences that might ensue from delay. His landlord felt only compassion for the horse; and, in the excess of his benevolence, made the lad dismount, and turn the beast into a neighbouring field to graze; while the poor woman on whose account he was employed, perished for want of that assistance, which, had he been permitted to proceed, he would have procured for her.

It may be said, that, in this instance, pride and selfishness were the predominat-

ing principles; but where there is neither pride nor selfishness, the operations of benevolence may be partial, and consequently abortive.

I have heard of a lady, who, with a zeal not inferior to that of Howard's, devoted her whole attention to relieving the sufferings of the feline species. Happy the hunted cat whom luckless school-boys had driven within her premises! Doubly happy the little kitten whom any of her numerous emissaries had rescued from the rude grasp of such unfeeling urchins! But while every half-starved cat in the neighbourhood was led, as if by instinct, to the banquet daily provided for them by their benefactress, it was currently reported that many half-starved children were sent fasting from the door.* Now, I wish it particularly to

* The person who related the facts above mentioned proceeded to state, that, in a season of scarcity, the parson of the parish deemed it his duty to remonstrate with

be observed, that this want of compassion towards the children was by no means the inevitable consequence of her compassion for the cats, but the consequence of having directed her attention exclusively to the sufferings of that persecuted race of animals, and of giving herself credit for an excess of sensibility on account of this partial and exclusive sympathy. The indulgence of her feelings was, in this instance, as in every instance in which sympathy only partially operates, a means of magnifying the idea of self.

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the lady on this perversion of her bounty, proving, by authentic calculation, that the food devoured by her favourite pets would, if it had been distributed to the poor, have afforded ample sustenance to a certain number of infants. Her reply is memorable: "O! do not speak of children; I cannot abide them, they are by nature so corrupt!"

CHAPTER V.

Of the benefits derived from the exercise of judgment, as guiding the operations of the affections. Examples. Disappointments in friendship and love, &c. &c. Ill-directed efforts of benevolence, intended to augment the sum of national happiness and prosperity.

By the wisdom of the Creator it has been ordained, that the speculative and active principles of our nature should mutually act upon and assist each other, and that this co-operation should be so essentially requisite, that the attempts to effect any considerable improvement in human character, independently of it, must necessarily be rendered abortive. For proofs of this fact, we may safely refer to experience and observation. From those we shall be convinced, that where the affections of the

heart are dormant, or only capable of partial exercise, the powers of the understanding become unprofitable, or only subservient to the gratification of the selfish principle; and that, where the mental faculties are defective, the affections of the heart, like the treasures of the fool, are lavished on useless or improper objects. Without benevolence, the wisdom of the wise proves in the end to be foolishness. Without judgment, the affections of the benevolent serve not the purposes of benevolence, but are frequently productive of misery. In this state of separation, neither answers the end for which it was called into existence. The solitary operation of either is fruitless. But it is worse than fruitless; for, as the laws of nature are never transgressed with impunity, when the reasoning powers cease to be influenced and directed by the affections, or the affections are destitute of the controul of reason, the consequences are inevitably painful. In the former instance, immediate misery may not

seem to be produced; but where, in the motives to action, no benevolent sympathy is permitted to mingle, success can never bring felicity, and disappointment of expected happiness is a species of misery. In the latter case, the consequences are more immediate, and, of course, are more obviously apparent.

One of the most striking illustrations of this fact may be pointed out, in the consequences resulting from the indulgence of parental affection, when that affection is neither directed nor controlled by judgment. However pure the love, however free from all admixture of selfishness, it may nevertheless be seen to operate to the prejudice of its objects, in almost every instance in which reason is incapable of directing its operations. It is thus that mothers, in the excess of tender solicitude to preserve the health, destroy the vigour of the constitution; and, from a dread of exposing their beloved little ones to tran-

sient inconvenience, lay the foundation of all the misery arising from puny delicacy; an evil which may attend them to the latest period of life. How many young men have, from this ill-judged tenderness, fallen a sacrifice to the hardships of a first campaign, who, under a more hardy discipline, and more judicious management, would have been enabled to bear up against all the evils to which, in such perilous circumstances, the human frame must necessarily be exposed. How many women have been doomed to languish through a sickly life, from the same want of attention to circumstances on which the preservation and improvement of the constitution so much depends. I here say nothing of the mind, because it is not often through pure affection that the mind is injured: the fondness through which it is most liable to suffer being, as has elsewhere been shown, an operation of the selfish principle. But where, from want of judgment, affection is rendered productive of

those very evils of which it has the greatest dread, the consequences may well be considered in the light of a penalty attached to irregular and defective cultivation of the mental faculties.

Besides the natural connexions formed by the ties of consanguinity, man is in social life connected with his fellow-men by innumerable bonds of sympathy; but, in the exercise of every benevolent affection which sympathy can produce, if the intellectual powers do not co-operate with the impulses of the heart, the result will be found unfavourable to happiness. The evil will outweigh the good; for the evil will be lasting and diffusive, the good only partial and transient. Thus, the charity that is not guided by judgment, proves the nourisher of idleness and vice; the generosity that is not checked by prudence, degenerates into prodigality; forbearance pushed to excess, assumes the character of pusillanimity; and candour, that most amia-

ble quality of the mind, acts as the enemy of virtue, in becoming the advocate of vice.

In each of these instances, the evil that is obviously produced, springs from exercising affection, independently of the assistance of judgment. The attention is in this case confined to one immediate object; and the faculty which ought to have been employed in estimating the benefit to be produced on a view of the whole consequences resulting from the action, being dormant, the affection is, by the strength of the guiding impulse, indulged to that point of excess at which it ceases to partake of the character of virtue. A certain punishment is, however, by the law of nature, rendered consequent on this dereliction of reason; and, sooner or later, every penalty imposed by nature is sure to be exacted.

Vexation, and regret, shame, anxiety, and resentment, will be confessed by those

who have experienced them, even in their slightest degree, to be punishments attended with no trivial anguish; yet to one or all of these is that heart liable to be frequently exposed, in which the sympathetic affections are neither directed nor controlled by the powers of intellect.

In proof of this, we need only advert to the querulous tones so commonly assumed by persons who have more sensibility than judgment. In every relation of life they have, according to their own accounts, discharged, and even outrun their duty; but, when they looked for a return of sympathy, have experienced the most cruel disappointment. Wounded on all hands by ingratitude or perfidy, they continually deplore their unhappy lot, and accuse Providence for having precluded them from those delights of social intercourse, or from those pleasures of friendship or of love, for which their hearts were so exquisitely adapted.

This is not only the language of gentle poets of the plaintive class; it is the language of thousands of human beings placed by Providence in circumstances so propitious, as even to be loaded with a superfluity of every temporal blessing. Whence does their misery proceed; or do they affect unhappiness when they are in reality happy? No: Their misery is not affected, it is real; and is the punishment consequent on that species of folly, which is the never-failing result of cultivating the affections through the medium of the imagination, while the powers of the understanding are only capable of feeble and precarious exercise.

In early youth, while the attention has as yet been more habitually directed to the objects of affection than to those which exercise and improve the judgment, the heart that overflows with sympathy gives to every casual intimacy the name of friendship. With that sacred name a thousand

delightful images are associated, and, in contemplating these, the ardent heart experiences the tenderest emotions of affection. What the friend really is signifies little; for the qualities which even the unripened judgment deems essential, are created by the magic of fancy, and appear adorned by her brilliant colouring.

There is little likelihood that such friendships should be permanent. The sympathies in which they originate are generally of a very transient nature, evaporating like the morning dew, as the day of life advances to its meridian. When they survive an intercourse with the world, we may be assured that judgment, as it advanced, gave its sanction to the choice of the affections; and whenever this takes place, the friendships of early life will be found to exceed all other friendships; for, as attention to the objects that exercise affection augments the feelings of affection, and attention to the qualities which are the objects of es-

teem and approbation, gives to approbation and esteem additional strength, the mingled sentiment which is thus produced, must in its nature be eternally progressive. What a glorious subject of contemplation to those, who, extending their views beyond the present transitory scene, look forward to a re-union with the dearest objects of their affections, in the regions of ever-during felicity!

But to return to the friendships formed by some partial sympathy in sentiment or opinion, and cemented by the imagination in the ideal bonds of fancied perfection; cruel reality will soon dispel the illusion, and put all the visionary qualities to flight. The wound thus given to the affections is frequently deep and severe, and sometimes productive of consequences that are very fatal, chilling and benumbing those sympathies, which, though in this instance they have, by injudicious management, occasioned suffering, are nevertheless essential to

happiness. Young men, in whose hearts the generous emotions of sympathy have been thus prematurely checked, are apt, from the pride of intellect, to repel all self-accusing reflections; and, rather than acknowledge that they have been deficient in penetration, to ascribe their disappointment to the indulgence of sentiments of affection, of which they now believe all human beings to be equally unworthy. Having thus lost all confidence in human virtue, they consider selfishness to be the only true wisdom, and thenceforth form no intimacies, enter into no connexions, but from motives that are purely selfish. It is needless to point out the consequences of this fatal error. What is the world, what all the pleasures it can afford, to him who is thus precluded from every joy of the heart!

Disappointments in love sometimes produce upon the character the same effects as disappointments in friendship. They generally also originate in the same source;

warm affections, influenced and directed by imagination, without the concurrence of judgment. Hence proceed all the miseries of hopeless love; miseries which, however they may be derided by the cold and selfish, have been known to inflict deep and lasting wounds in many a youthful bosom. The more amiable the heart, that is to say, the more completely its affections have been developed and exercised by attention to their proper objects, the deeper and more painful will be the wound received through the medium of those affections. The passion of love, in grosser natures, is, like all other passions, transient. It may be violent to excess; but the more violent, the sooner will it reach its climax, and, consequently, the sooner will it subside. It is in the pure and gentle breast alone that love is either lasting or disinterested. Unless, however, the sympathy which is its basis be real, founded on qualities which have a real, not an imaginary existence, disappointment must sooner or later follow;

and in such cases, what is usually called a disappointment in love, is, in fact, a blessing, rescuing the misguided heart from the more dreadful and more permanent sufferings that flow from an ill-assorted union.

Those estimable qualities, in which the affections of the heart and the faculties of the understanding are seen to blend in beautiful union, are not always those that appear most alluring to the youthful fancy. Misled by false and dangerous associations, it prefers the dazzling to the solid, and, attaching notions of excellence and perfection to the object that excels in some one favourite point, however little connected with all that is truly estimable, rests its confidence on a reed, liable alike to be broken by the summer gale, or nipped by the winter frost.

During the halcyon days of courtship, where judgment is wanting, imagination generally succeeds in producing a belief,

that sympathy between the two souls is in all respects perfect and complete. But, alas! the power of imagination generally ends with the honeymoon. It is then discovered, that the qualities of the heart and the mind are not exactly such as she had represented them; and, with the discovery, the charm of eternal love is terminated. Whatever be the pain occasioned by the conviction, no blame is however thrown on *self* by the victim of self-delusion. The attention which was before marriage exclusively directed to the discovery of beauties and perfections in the other party, is now as exclusively occupied in the discovery of faults and blemishes; and these, again, are by imagination exaggerated far beyond the truth; while, whatever real good qualities there yet remain, are so far from being viewed with complacency, that they are held in aversion, as the cause of that delusion, under the influence of which the irrevocable engagement was contracted.

Such examples are not improperly held forth as affording a salutary lesson to young persons, of the consequences of what are commonly called *love matches*. But if the moralist, in descanting on the misery of the connexion, ascribes that misery, not to a defect in judgment, but solely to the share which the heart had in forming it, the lesson may prove worse than useless. It will infallibly do so, if it tends to produce a belief, that, in forming an indissoluble connexion, the affections need not be consulted, and that every sympathy of the heart may be dispensed with. Here, again, the want of judgment is equally obvious, and equally fatal. Reason points out the imperative necessity of mutual sympathy and affection between those whose every action, and every desire, and every thought, in some measure affects each other. Where this sympathy is wanting, the union must remain imperfect; and where the qualities, which are the objects of sympathy, have no existence but in the imagination, sym-

pathy will be only transient: Nor, though it should be succeeded by that species of attachment which is produced by connecting the idea of self with the partner of one's destiny, will that attachment serve as an efficient substitute for love; nor worldly prudence as a substitute for wisdom: for never will these give birth to that esteem and friendship in which the understanding and the affections are blended, and into which love, when guided by judgment, naturally subsides.

Persons who confine their attention to what passes on the great theatre of public life, are very apt to be mistaken in their calculations concerning the happiness and misery experienced by those whom they never see but in what may be termed the hours of exhibition, when they appear adorned with the insignia of felicity. But by all who have opportunities of observing the real state and condition of the mind, it will be acknowledged, that it is not in the

power of rank or fortune, or any external circumstance, to alter the course assigned, by the laws of our nature, to happiness and misery. Independently of the exercise of the benevolent affections, the only sense of enjoyment which the heart can experience, arises from the gratification of the desire to magnify the idea of self, under some of its modifications: a gratification which, as I have endeavoured to show, is neither pure nor permanent, and eventually produces a preponderance of misery. But though a certain degree of happiness be in every case allotted as the reward of active benevolence, if the affections have been but partially cultivated, the happiness will in this case also be transient, and may eventually be succeeded by unhappiness. When, of the qualities to which we attach the idea of virtue, some only have been regarded by us with that attention which is requisite to produce emotions of sympathy, it is in the exercise of the affections corresponding to these qualities, that our

little stock of virtue will be comprised. In this case it is evident, that we may occasionally be exposed to the danger of exercising certain qualities at the expense of others that are in their nature no less obligatory; and hence the happiness naturally resulting from the exercise of benevolent affections, may be lessened or destroyed.

But even where the heart is susceptible of every emotion of virtue, if wisdom does not preside and regulate the exercise of the affections, they will fail to produce to ourselves or others that degree of happiness, which, under the guidance of reason, they would infallibly have produced. Proofs of this are within the reach of every person capable of observation; and I am persuaded, that if we give ourselves the trouble to inquire into the facts, we shall be completely convinced, that, in a great plurality of instances, the misery experienced from ingratitude, the mortification resulting from a disappointment of our

hopes of doing good to others, and the pain excited on perceiving our good intentions frustrated, misrepresented, or misunderstood, originate solely in our having blindly yielded to the impulses of our hearts, without consulting our understandings. It is only the folly of self-partiality which in such cases leads us to persist in giving to our own conduct unlimited applause, and on the conduct of others as unbounded reprehension: but our doing so is not to be ascribed merely to the perversion of intellect, but to the operation of the selfish principle, which complete and perfect benevolence would have counteracted and subdued. Would we make a proper use of the lessons of experience, we should endeavour to trace every disappointment to its source. In order to illustrate this point, let us suppose, that to a person of sensibility who takes a benevolent interest in the happiness of his fellow-creatures, an opportunity of conferring a singular benefit, by making a certain sacrifice, is presented. The circum-

stances may be such, that, in contemplating them, every generous and tender sympathy may be excited; the desire of benefiting the objects may thus become paramount, and his attention be so entirely absorbed in examining the means by which his purpose is to be effected, that the value of the sacrifice he is required to make, and the nature of the obstacles which may interpose to render it useless, may escape his notice. But, if his judgment has been habitually exercised to the same extent as his affections, this cannot well take place. His attention will, in that case, not be so completely absorbed by the objects which excite his feelings, as to prevent its being directed to those which are within the sphere of judgment. He will thus be enabled clearly to perceive, how far his power of doing good is likely to be circumscribed by circumstances; what obstacles are likely to arise from the character and opposite views of those with whom, or on whom, he is to act; and, after making these de-

ductions, he will calmly calculate, how far the good that remains evidently practicable, is worthy of the sacrifice at which it is to be purchased.

On considering these two opposite modes of conduct, it must, I think, be clear, that should disappointment ensue in the former instance, it will inevitably produce more poignant sufferings than could follow in the latter. In the event of disappointment, attention must be forcibly drawn to obstacles, which, had it not been absorbed by other objects, would have been perceived and estimated. Hence, in an ingenuous mind, the pang of self-reproach will increase the anguish arising from the frustration of a benevolent purpose, while the consciousness of having implicitly yielded to the dictates of a pure and generous sympathy, will give to ingratitude a more than common power to wound. From a mind thus torn, it is in vain to look for that apparent consistency which we have a right

to expect from those in whom no benevolent impulse has ever been so strong as to outrun the slow march of prudence. For such, therefore, while they are enduring the punishment to which they have subjected themselves, great allowances ought surely to be made: but as all the corrections appointed by Providence, are of the nature of mercies, it is by experiencing such corrections, that the heart learns the necessity of submitting its impulses to the controul of wisdom. Where the proper effect has been produced, the sufferings experienced will no longer be proclaimed as proofs of the malignity, or perfidy, or folly, of those who have inflicted them; but be silently acquiesced in, as the inevitable result of having acted without consulting the judgment. Whoever is incapable of exercising this degree of candour, may assure himself, that the penalty he has been compelled to pay for his imprudence, has failed to produce the effect for which it was by Providence intended.

I proceed to observe, that it is not in private life alone that the overflowings of benevolence are frequently lost, on account of the erroneous direction given to the current. To those who, from their eminent talents, or exalted rank, have it in their power to contribute to a nation's weal, national happiness is, or ought to be, an object of primary importance; but it is an object so complex, that it is but rarely, in the course of ages, a mind springs up capable of giving that degree of attention to all the parts of which it is composed, which is requisite in order to comprehend how the happiness of the whole may be affected. Even in the examination of the circumstances which are supposed most essentially to contribute to the general good, if any one of these circumstances occupy a greater share of his attention than the others, he will be apt to be misled, and his benevolence will consequently be rendered fruitless. In proof of this, we need only advert to the variety of opinions that have,

even in our own day, been advanced, respecting the essentials of national felicity.

At no distant period, a nation's happiness was estimated by the number of its inhabitants. An abundant population was then deemed the most incontestable evidence of increasing prosperity; and, in consequence of this opinion, the benevolence of the politician was exerted in promoting early marriages among the poor. Nothing was then heard of but the happy result of bestowing rewards on the prolific, and making the obstinate bachelor pay, by severe fines, the penalty due to the State, for his sullen indifference to its prosperity. When, lo! the error was detected, and population found to be a nation's ruin! No longer is the poor man's wedding a legitimate theme of congratulation: No longer is the birth of a child to be considered as an addition to his blessings. It is the solitary bachelor, who denies himself the solace of all domestic ties, and bends his whole atten-

tion to the object of accumulating wealth, until his selfish soul becomes incapable of every generous attachment, that is now alone to be approved!

The connexion between national wealth and national happiness, has in all periods seemed so indisputable, that whoever can by his policy augment the national resources, is certain of obtaining the meed of public applause. To what an immense number of schemes, and legislative projects, has the benevolent desire of making a nation rich, in order to make it happy, given birth! In consequence of the direction thus given to attention, what efforts have been made to turn commerce into those channels which were dug for it by political wisdom; and when it obstinately refused to flow in these, what pains have been taken to watch its wanderings, to hem in its banks, and, by artificial means, to accelerate its movements! At length, in consequence of attending to circumstances that had before escaped observa-

tion, it was discovered, that all this labour had been better spared, and that commerce never flowed so prosperously as when left to itself. In consequence of this discovery, the Legislature had nothing to do but to break down the mounds it had before built up, and to remove the barriers it had with so much care erected.

When we take a view of these revolutions in opinion, concerning the methods of promoting national happiness and prosperity, it does not seem chimerical to suppose, that a time may arrive when it shall be discovered, that the most inseparable of all connexions is that between happiness and virtue. National happiness will then be considered to depend on national morals. To guard these morals from corruption, by removing those snares, which, while occupied in watching over the sources of wealth, the law itself may have inadvertently sanctioned, will then become an object of attention to the statesman's

mind. But it is to education, as the fountain from whence all moral improvement emanates, that he will chiefly direct his views: to education; not merely as a means of giving to the state the advantages arising from increasing the number of intelligent beings,—but to education, as the means by which the intellectual powers of individual minds are to be rendered useful to the community: an object that can only be obtained, by rendering education instrumental in the subjugation of the selfish principle, by enlarging the sphere and operation of the benevolent affections.

CHAPTER VI.

Obstacles presented by the operation of the selfish principle to the development of the benevolent affections. Consequent inadequacy of the means provided by nature for their cultivation. Additional means afforded by divine revelation. Illustrations.

CONCERNING the degree in which the benevolent affections contribute to social and individual happiness, there can be but one opinion. They are a branch of the tree of life implanted in the human heart; but, alas, planted near to that tree of death, beneath whose fatal shade they wither and decay. Were it not for this opposing principle, which checks their growth, and prevents their early blossoms from arriving at maturity, the affections would produce fruits of happiness that would make a paradise of the world we inhabit. Such, how-

ever, is the strength of this opposing principle in the human heart, that, notwithstanding the ample provision that has been made by nature in the frame and constitution of the mind, for the growth of the affections, they must, without means beyond that which nature has provided, be continually exposed to the danger of being perverted or destroyed.

That this is no visionary theory, but a sound deduction from indisputable facts, the history of man bears witness. We there learn, that, in the savage state, his affections blossom not beyond the period of infancy; or, if any benevolent impulses should occasionally influence his heart, they are too transient and irregular to oppose any steady counteraction to the selfish principle, by which he is in most cases completely governed.

Nor does the improvement of his intellectual powers produce, in this respect,

any very material difference. In whatever stage in the progress of civilization we contemplate our species, we see the propensity to magnify the idea of self, like the spirit described in the Apocalypse, "going forth conquering and to conquer." When victorious, or assuming the colour of victory, we see "power given to it to take peace from the earth," and, in the pale hue of the malignant passions, destroying by the sword of persecution the virtues that offer resistance to its sway.*

In the most advanced state of civilization and refinement to which any of the heathen nations arrived, though we per-

* The passage to which allusion has here been made, will be found in the 6th chapter of the Revelations of St John, which, like many other of the mysterious passages in that book, when considered as presenting a view of the passions and corruptions which were to impede the progress, and resist the spirit of Christianity, afford not merely gratification to an idle curiosity, but salutary and useful instruction.

ceive the strongest evidence of the effects produced by being placed in circumstances favourable to the development and exercise of the faculties of the understanding, we at the same time perceive evidence no less strong, of those failings and vices which arise from a defective and imperfect cultivation of the affections; plainly intimating, that the means provided in the constitution of our nature had been rendered abortive, and that man, in forfeiting the high privilege of communion with his Maker, was precluded the exercise of sympathies essential to the perfection of his character.

In opposition to this, it may perhaps be observed, that though the light of the divine presence was withheld, the light of nature remained; and that, even in the darkest hour, the Almighty ordained that man should not be left without a witness of his power and majesty. Wherever he cast his eyes, the scene was still full of God. The heavens and the earth proclaim-

ed the omnipotence of their Creator; and the provision made for the preservation and perpetuity of the innumerable myriads of living creatures, bore testimony, that the Being who destined them to the enjoyment of existence, was in his nature benignant as powerful.

But it was to the reasoning faculty that the testimony was addressed. The power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Supreme Intelligence, could only be deduced from appearances which it was the province of the understanding to investigate, and which, though obvious to the senses, were frequently found far beyond the reach of human wisdom to explain. No sooner did the chain of evidence seem to be broken, than faith was at a stand. The propensity to magnify the idea of self then impelled to the formation of systems, which it was the glory of intellect to defend; and henceforth the powers of the understanding, instead of being engaged in contemplating

the proofs of divine wisdom and goodness in the works of creation, were employed in colouring those inventions by which the idea of self was to be exalted.

The heart being thus left destitute of that most powerful aid which it derives, in the cultivation of its moral and benignant sympathies, from the contemplation of the divine attributes, its affections could only be cultivated to the degree in which the sympathies were called forth by attention to such beneficent qualities as happened to exist in the minds of those with whom individuals were conversant. The consequences were, that even those affections for which nature seems most amply to have provided, were so weak and inefficient, as to yield to the first suggestions of vanity or pride. If there is one sympathy of the human heart, for which a peculiar and extraordinary provision has been made, it is that which springs in a mother's heart on contemplating her infant progeny. With what ease

this strongest impulse of affection is overcome, when the heart is left dependant for the cultivation of its sympathies on the provision made by nature, has been proved from incontestable facts; and we may justly infer, that where the first and most powerful of the affections has such feeble influence, the other benevolent sympathies will have but a very partial and limited operation.

Had instances of the triumph of the selfish principle over the impulses of natural affection, been confined to ignorant and barbarous nations, we might be allowed to consider the uncultivated state of the intellectual powers as affording a complete explanation of the phenomenon. But if, not only in the customs and manners, but in the civil and political institutions of the whole Pagan world, we find proofs of a sanction having been given to practices totally inconsistent with that pure benevolence by which alone the selfish principle

can be counteracted and subdued, we must perceive, that whether the intellectual powers are cultivated or uncultivated, the benignant sympathies, when not exercised by attention to qualities more pure and perfect than can be exemplified in imperfect beings, are only capable of a partial and precarious operation.

Hence arises a cogent, and, it appears to me, convincing argument, of the probability of divine revelation; which, in this point of view, may be considered as an extension of the benefits conferred by nature, in rendering the heart susceptible of moral impressions, from the contemplation of qualities that excite the emotions of sympathy. Is it incredible, that HE who endowed the heart with sensibility; who, by a law of nature, as invariable in its operations as that which directs the planets in their courses, rendered attention to certain qualities productive of correspondent emotions of sympathy, should, in the infinity

of his benevolence, and in compassion to a lost and perishing race, restore to the human mind the advantages, which, according to the constitution of its nature, are necessarily to be derived from the contemplation of moral qualities in a state of infinite perfection? By the law of nature, the tenderness that bespeaks compassion, the kindness that indicates beneficence, and the solicitude that expresses love, are, even when presented to the infant mind, productive of correspondent emotions. To the child, the human being in whom these qualities appear to exist, seems altogether perfect; but, as the understanding advances to maturity, the illusion is dispelled by the perception of opposite qualities in the same character: and there can be no doubt that the discovery of the alloy will, even when experiencing the effects of love, or kindness, or compassion, tend in some degree to weaken the impression. The same observation applies with regard to every moral quality, which, when evinced in hu-

man conduct, excites the emotions of admiration, affection, or esteem. The magnanimity displayed in the forgiveness of enemies, the fortitude which shrinks not from suffering in the cause of truth, the firmness and impartiality of justice, and the heroic tenderness of mercy, have their correspondent emotions in every heart; emotions that never fail to be excited by sympathy, on a certain degree of attention given to the action in which any of these several qualities are exhibited. But according to the circumstances in which human beings are placed, it is impossible that all should have an opportunity of contemplating qualities eminently excellent or beneficent; and consequently impossible, that qualities of this description should have any existence in the minds of the great generality of mankind, if only to be contemplated as they are exemplified in human conduct. Even when, by the advantages of education, our knowledge of excellence is enlarged; though we thus

become acquainted with the existence of qualities which are the objects of our moral approbation and sympathy, if seen but from a distance, the attention we bestow on them is seldom such as to have any considerable influence on our dispositions. It is the imagination, and not the heart, that is, in this instance, most likely to be impressed; and of the almost total inutility of the affections that are solely cultivated through the medium of imagination, we have in a preceding chapter brought forward many proofs.

How then should man, while destitute of all knowledge of a nature superior to his own, obtain means of cultivating all the noble, generous, and benevolent affections, of which his heart has been by his Creator rendered susceptible? In the form and organization of every species of animal, we perceive the most exact correspondence between the powers bestowed, and the wants which were to be supplied. Every

living thing, whether destined to inhabit the earth, to soar into the regions of the air, or to dwell in the watery element, is fitted by nature for its peculiar destination, and in every situation is provided with food convenient for it. The Giver of life supplies the wants of all that live. Do we require further proofs of the continual and ever-continued operations of his providential care? Let us consider, how often in every minute we draw breath, and then let us seek information concerning the nature of the air we breathe. Let us ask, what would be the consequence to life if any of its component parts were withheld, or suffered in a great degree to preponderate? Let us desire our teachers to inform us, why these fatal circumstances do not more frequently take place? We shall be told of the sources whence the different gases derive their apportionate supplies, and of the regularity with which the supply is afforded. But who provided these sources of nourishment to the element? Who ad-

justed its proportions, "weighing the winds in a balance?" And can we, who thrice in every minute, during the period of our existence, experience the result of that providential care, which has, by a series of contrivances, adapted the element we breathe to the lungs formed to receive it, and where it is again to be decomposed for purposes important to the preservation of life; can we who thus live by miracle, be so absurd as to imagine, that with the labour of creation the care of the Almighty ceased? Or shall we believe, that the life of the soul is less precious in his sight than the life of the body? If the exercise of the affections of the heart be no less necessary to the health of the soul, than is the air we breathe in to the health of our material frame, the interposition of divine mercy, in supplying to those affections an effectual means of exercise, must appear but an event to be expected in the ordinary course of nature.

Let us now inquire, how far the knowledge of God, communicated by divine revelation, is adapted to the wants of man, as affording to the affections of his heart such means of cultivation, as in his present state could not through any other medium be obtained. It would in me be the height of folly and presumption, to suppose myself qualified to do justice to the important theme; but, far as it is beyond my power to take that enlarged and comprehensive view of the subject, which I trust may be presented by minds more richly gifted, believing that the hints I offer may be useful in producing inquiry, terminating in conviction, I am not deterred, by the consciousness of their imperfection, from boldly recommending them to the reader's attention.

In the view I have presented of the provision made by the wisdom of nature for the development of the affections, it has been my endeavour to prove, that it is in

the consciousness of being the object of parental tenderness, that affection is first excited in the infant heart. I have shown* in what way the notions of kindness, beneficence, compassion, &c. beget, through sympathy, correspondent emotions in the heart of him who is himself the object on whom these benevolent qualities are exercised: I have likewise shown in what way sympathy may fail to produce its perfect work, by the interposition of the selfish principle; or from the discovery or suspicion of the existence of opposite qualities, which are no sooner perceived, or imagined to co-operate with those that excite affection, than sympathy is destroyed, or becomes imperfect and incomplete.

Let us now observe how the knowledge of God, communicated by revelation, remedies this evil. The first object which it offers to our contemplation is the Supreme

* Chapter I. of the present Essay.

Being, as the Father, and Governor, and Protector of the human race; infinite in goodness and in mercy: and that the sympathy excited by these endearing qualities may have its full effect in producing correspondent affections, they are represented *as operating only for our advantage;* as qualities, still more, of which every one of us may consider himself, individually, as the immediate and peculiar object. If, according to the constitution of the human mind, benignity excites our love, and beneficence, by a similar operation of sympathy, produces, when we are ourselves the objects of it, an emotion of gratitude, the means afforded by revelation for cultivating these affections must be confessed so infinitely beyond all other means, that had the miraculous interposition of Providence answered no other end than this, the benefit is such as to have justified a departure from, or rather an extension of the ordinary laws of nature. But what are the laws of nature respecting the government of the moral and intellec-

tual world? What do we know of them farther than has been revealed? We might here with propriety advert to the absurdities of the heathen philosophy: But it is of more importance to attend to the object of our present inquiry.

Let us then proceed to observe, that the knowledge of God afforded by revelation, having supplied to the heart a source of ceaseless gratitude and boundless love, must necessarily, in proportion to the degree of attention bestowed on the exciting qualities, give exercise to those affections. All the other attributes of Deity are, in the contemplation of them, calculated in like manner to produce correspondent emotions.

Power is naturally the object of reverence and awe. But, when contemplated in beings subject to human imperfection, the knowledge of the purposes to which it may be made subservient, renders it the object

of slavish fear, unless when we can connect the feeling of self with him in whom the power resides. The power possessed by a fellow-creature, is thus either made propitious to the gratification of the selfish principle, or leads to the production of a passion allied to hatred and malignity.

How opposite are the effects produced in contemplating the power of Omnipotence! The knowledge of the wisdom, and truth, and never-failing mercy of the ALL-POWERFUL, renders the contemplation productive of affections salutary to the heart, exciting reverence unmingled with slavish terror, admiration and confidence unpolluted by any base alloy from the propensity to magnify the idea of self. The power of the Almighty is the source of a fortitude which no inferior power can shake, of a magnanimity which no fear of the wrath of man can subdue. The power of God is indeed manifested in his works; but it is by revelation alone that the bene-

ficial operation of that power, with regard to his intelligent offspring, is made known. The advantages resulting from it are too obvious to stand in need of comment.

The indications of that wisdom which is the perfection of intellect, as arguing the possession of all the mental faculties in their most perfect state, are not naturally contemplated with indifference. Superior wisdom, wherever it is perceived or acknowledged, or even imagined, excites our respect, esteem, or admiration. The belief of its existing in those who govern us, produces acquiescence in their government. The perception of the benefits that result from wisdom, besides proving a powerful motive to the exertion of intellect, excites some of the finest emotions of the heart, and exercises some of its best affections.

But, instead of being inclined to direct attention to the proofs of eminent wisdom

exhibited in the sentiments or conduct of a fellow-creature, we are, in truth, from the influence of the selfish principle, so much averse to doing so, that unless when we can connect the idea of self with him whose wisdom is the theme of eulogium, we naturally turn from the contemplation; or, if we investigate the proofs, it is with the latent hope of finding them defective, and of being able to point out the deficiency. Thus the advantages to be derived to the human mind, from the exercise of those affections which the contemplation of wisdom, even in that imperfect state in which it can alone be seen in those who inherit imperfection, are in a great measure lost.

Besides, though of the excellency of divine wisdom a few reasoning minds might, from the exertion of their natural faculties, obtain some notion, to the human race in general, all means of acquiring such ideas of its excellency as are productive of sympathy, all opportunity of observing its

fruits, or of following out its consequences, are in the natural course of things withheld; and would have been withheld for ever, had not God in his infinite goodness revealed himself to mankind. By divine revelation, the "excellency of wisdom" is made known, not merely to a few studious minds, but to all who are capable of perception. By revelation the designs of divine wisdom are rendered so obvious, that he that runs may read. They are written in legible characters in the firmament of heaven, and in every leaf of grass that covers the fields. From the contemplation of omniscience, no rank, no lowliness of circumstance, no deficiency of cultivation, precludes the worshipper of God. An object is thus continually presented to his affections, calculated to afford them perpetual exercise, and to produce a correspondent influence on the heart. The sympathetic affection thus called forth, is fitted, in its nature, to be infinitely more operative than that which is excited by the contempla-

tion of human wisdom, even when imagination clothes it with perfection. The wisdom of an ancient sage, is to the intelligent mind an object of admiration. But the wisdom of the Creator and Governor of the universe, is the object of the loftier sentiment of adoration, inspiring not only awe, but implicit confidence in his government, and subsiding into perfect resignation to his divine will.

In another respect the difference is perhaps yet more obvious; for as in discovering proofs of extraordinary wisdom in any being with whom we are connected by the tie of a common nature, the glory reflected upon our nature is in some measure *ours*, we, in rejoicing in it, are apt to forget how inferior we are to the object in whom we glory; and thus the discovery, instead of begetting humility, gratifies our pride. From directing our attention to the evidences of divine wisdom, no such result is to be apprehended. The deeper our con-

viction, the more exalted our conceptions of the eternally Omniscient, the more strongly are we impressed with a sense of our own weakness and imperfection. But, though humbled by the conviction, the humility which flows from it produces no pusillanimous dejection; for, assured by revelation of the paternal government of God, the idea of the connexion that subsists between his creatures and their heavenly Father, tends to elevate the heart, while it roots out all presumption.

The knowledge obtained by revelation, of the holiness and purity of the divine nature, has somewhat of a similar influence. The sympathetic emotion produced by an attentive observation of the mind and conduct of any person, who appears to us remarkably pure, and virtuous, and amiable, is perhaps one of the most salutary affections of the heart. If attention to these qualities becomes habitual, the heart will be gradually purified, by the introduction

of pure ideas; and thus, by sympathy with the virtuous, habits of virtue will be acquired.

But where, while man was left to the vain imaginations of his own heart, were these models of purity to be found? Of the holiness of perfect purity, who among the nations that knew not God formed the most remote conception? Holiness accordingly entered not into the list of Pagan virtues; for to those who were deemed most virtuous in the Pagan world, no object in which the attribute of perfect purity could be contemplated, presented itself. The consequences were obvious, and are too well known to be denied.

With the knowledge of God communicated by divine revelation, the first idea of perfect holiness was presented to the mind of man; an idea that it is impossible to contemplate without emotions which tend at once to elevate and purify the heart;

and, if habitually contemplated, must preserve it from all iniquity. But what tends to enhance the advantages resulting from having thus an opportunity of improving the heart by the contemplation of infinite purity, is the knowledge of the divine omnipresence, by which we are perpetually reminded, that the thoughts of our hearts, as well as the actions of our lives, are exposed to the view of Him whose holiness and purity we are impelled to reverence and adore. The effects produced by this knowledge, will exactly correspond to the degree in which these attributes of Deity have occupied our attention. Where attention is given to them habitually, the consciousness of our being, during every moment of our existence, in the presence of the Most Holy, must produce affections correspondent to the idea of holiness. It cannot, from the nature of the human heart, be otherwise; for in the heart provision has been made for the operation of this sympathy; and it is as impossible that that sym-

pathy should not awaken on the requisite application of attention, as that the heat of the sun should not warm the object upon which it shines.

If the knowledge afforded by revelation of the omnipresence and holiness of the great God, fails to produce the natural effects upon the human heart, it is because attention is only *casually*, and not *habitually*, nor even seriously, given to the subject. Our interest in it is therefore forgotten, or only occasionally called to our recollection, by some adverse or striking occurrence. But the value of the advantages naturally resulting from our knowledge of these momentous truths, is not hence diminished. If we forego these advantages, by withholding our attention, we have ourselves to blame. None to whom the word of God has been made known, can now plead as an excuse for being deficient in purity and holiness, that he has no object to contemplate in whom perfect purity forever

dwells. None can make an apology for being influenced by the fear or example of a fellow-creature to do evil, who knows that God is the invisible witness of every action, the rewarder of righteousness, and the punisher of all iniquity.

The emotions produced by contemplating the justice of the Supreme Being, are those of the profoundest reverence and awe. But to beings so liable to be influenced by a principle which impels to evil, these emotions cannot fail of proving salutary. The restraint which they lay upon the desire to magnify the idea of self, is too obvious to require illustration; and in this respect they have the same operation as all the benevolent affections.

The emotions produced by contemplating the immutability of the divine nature, are somewhat similar to those excited by the contemplation of the attribute of justice. To use the words of a moral writer held

in deserved estimation, "Immutability is, indeed, so clearly connected with the notion of supreme perfection, that wherever any rational conceptions of a deity have taken place, this attribute has been ascribed to him. Reason taught the wise and reflecting in every age to believe, that, as what is eternal cannot die, so what is perfect cannot vary; and that the great Governor of the universe could be no other than an unchangeable Being."*

Let us now inquire, how far this conception of the immutability of the divine nature operated upon the heart, when supported by no higher authority than the deductions of reason. To the few who were capable of comprehending the arguments from which the inference was deduced, the idea of the unchangeable nature of the Supreme Intelligence might afford a reasonable ground for confiding in the con-

* Dr BLAIR'S Sermons, Vol. ii. Ser. 4.

tinued regularity of those laws which appeared to govern the system of the universe. The sun might be expected to rise forever at its appointed hour, and all the seasons to return at the accustomed period; and this constancy, when considered as originating in the unchangeableness of the presiding spirit, might doubtless occasion in reflecting minds emotions of reverence, of astonishment, and of admiration; and that these emotions would, if habitually excited, have a moral influence on the heart, cannot be denied. But though the heart of every human being was formed susceptible of similar emotions, it was but rarely, perhaps not in more than in two or three instances in the course of ages, that the attention of an individual was directed to the object by which they were to be excited. Nor could any change in the political government of nations have, in this respect, made any considerable difference. The power of deep and abstract reasoning never can, from a variety of

causes, be attained by the majority of mankind; and even if possessed, the chances of its being directed to the discovery of the perfections of the divine nature, are extremely precarious.

By revelation, the immutability of the Supreme Governor of the universe is not only rendered evident to the meanest capacity, but, from the ideas with which it is connected, made the source of emotions which beneficially influence the heart, by exercising its noblest affections. Amid the vicissitudes of the present ever-changing scene, what consolation does it afford to know, that the Disposer of all events is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever! What fortitude, what magnanimity, what superiority to all terrestrial evils, may we expect from him, who habitually considers himself under the immediate care and protection of an ever-present God, whose goodness and mercy are unceasing and unchangeable! What humility, and modera-

tion, and uprightness of integrity, and holiness of life, must inevitably result from habitual attention to the qualities of holiness and of justice, displayed in the adorable nature of Him who is eternally immutable! Yet these ideas are objects of contemplation, to which, through the medium of divine revelation, all have access. While they afford to the cultivated understanding a theme worthy of employing all its faculties, they are, as illustrated in Scripture, rendered level to the capacity of the illiterate. Who, on considering these things, can forbear to exclaim with fervent gratitude, that divine revelation is indeed adapted to the wants of man!

But though, throughout the whole series of revelations, the attributes of Deity are presented to the mind in a manner calculated to excite the correspondent affections of love, gratitude, reverence, implicit trust and confidence, it is in the clearer views of the divine nature and government, revealed

by Jesus Christ, that we are in a great measure restored to those inestimable benefits enjoyed by our first parents in their state of innocence, when, by communion with their Creator, attention was incessantly called forth and engaged in contemplating divine perfection.

In the Saviour of the world we have not only a pattern of excellence exhibited for our imitation, but, in every feature of his character, we have an object of contemplation, to which it is impossible to give any degree of attention without experiencing correspondent emotions. If we investigate these emotions, we shall find them perfectly in unison, or rather exactly the same with those produced by a contemplation of the divine attributes. The advantages resulting from having thus an opportunity of cultivating the same affections that are called forth in the contemplation of the divine attributes, by giving our attention to what may comparatively be termed a

familiar object, is unspeakably great. The awful distance to which weak and imperfect mortals are removed from the immortal and invisible Creator, is a consideration that naturally appals the human mind. Surrounded by the brightness of unapproachable glory, the moral perfections of the divine nature fill the soul with such awful reverence, as must be in some degree adverse to that habitual contemplation of them, which is requisite to produce correspondent affections in the heart.

On examining the nature and purport of each successive revelation which we believe to have been miraculously communicated, we may perceive how admirably the laws and precepts promulgated were adapted to the state of mind naturally existing in those to whom they were addressed. The idea of the Godhead, presented through the medium of the patriarchs, was in all respects the same as that which was communicated in the gospel. But as, from the nature

of the human mind, it must, in the rude state of these early ages, have been productive of the extreme of reverential awe, the Law was adapted to this very circumstance; and such external acts commanded, as should afford tests of that obedience, which holy reverence for the Lawgiver would necessarily produce.

In Jesus Christ, the "brightness of the Father's glory," the moral attributes and perfections of Deity, as justice, mercy, holiness, wisdom, &c. appeared modified, so as not only to be suited to the human capacity, but, being exhibited in the field of human action, naturally became objects of attention and imitation. And as attention to these qualities, according to the constitution of the mind, begets correspondent affections in the heart, no sooner was God thus revealed to man, than the test of obedience was altered. Instead of a strict performance of external acts, a strict conformity of the will and affections

to the divine prototype, was thenceforth requisite. The precepts of other teachers of righteousness were addressed merely to the understanding; but, as God requires of man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not, he, through Jesus Christ, bestowed the means of exciting and cultivating those affections, of which it is the aim of all moral precepts to command the exercise.

The entire correspondence that subsists between the life and doctrines of our Lord, has an evident tendency to strengthen the impression which either, if considered separately, must necessarily produce. By habitual attention to his precepts, enforced by his example, these affections come to be habitually exercised, and, as far as the infirmities of human nature permit, are converted into permanent dispositions. Of these dispositions it need only be observed, that as they are reflections, however faint and imperfect, from the divine attributes,

they must in so far partake of the divine nature. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," is an exhortation which, in this point of view, implies the necessity of cultivating the whole of those qualities which are the objects of moral approbation, and which, by the original constitution of our nature, are transcribed into the heart, by habitual attention to Him in whom they dwell.

The affections being active principles of our nature, cannot exist without being exercised: And in order to improve and strengthen them to the degree that is necessary to ensure their permanence, they must be habitually exercised. This truth may nevertheless be received, and acknowledged, and understood, without producing any of the fruits of righteousness; for however thoroughly the reason may be impressed with just notions of the nature of virtue, if these notions only serve to give a salutary exercise to the intellectual powers,

without exciting the emotions of affection, they will not effect a change on the dispositions of the heart. It is here that the precepts of the gospel have a manifest superiority. In contemplating the mysteries of redemption, the divine qualities displayed in the character of the Redeemer and Saviour of the world excite emotions, which render the precepts he, by the authority of the Most High, delivered for our instruction, productive of the most pure and exalted affections of which the heart is susceptible, impelling to the perpetual exercise of piety and benevolence.

The benevolence thus produced and exercised, is, like the source in which it originates, uncircumscribed by any bounds. All the creatures to whom the adored Creator has given existence—all of that world which "God so loved, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"—are objects meet for the

exercise of that benevolence, and afford, accordingly, a ceaseless exercise to some or other of the benevolent affections. So admirably are those affections adapted to the circumstances in which human beings are placed, that it is impossible for the imagination to conceive a situation in which they may not be exercised, either to the great benefit of the individual or of his fellow-creatures. In society they are sustained by the performance of all the social duties.

The heart that is elevated and enlarged by the habitual contemplation of the most sublime generosity, cannot but be generous; nor can opportunities for the exercise of this affection be ever wanting. The tenderness and complacency inspired by an habitual sense of the divine goodness and mercy, the inevitable result of habitual attention to the most astonishing display of divine love, will, in its perennial flow, diffuse happiness and comfort, promoting and

increasing all the enjoyments of social and domestic intercourse.

As, when our attention is directed to the connexion that subsists between us and the supreme Object of our veneration, the comparison between our own merits and the perfection which we contemplate in him, must inspire the deepest and most heartfelt humility; so the consciousness of our own weakness and liability to err, must inevitably produce charity and forgiveness to others. The affections connected with that humility which springs from a deep conviction of how far we ourselves fall short of what we ought to be, are the genuine motives to the exercise of candour and forbearance, of gentleness and mercy, as well as to all those acts which flow from a heart-felt desire to do good to all whom we have it in our power to benefit or relieve. It is the charity described by St Paul, of which almsgiving is but a branch; and may be as effec-

tually exercised in poverty as in affluence, may shine as brightly in the daily intercourse of domestic life, as in those splendid deeds which obtain the applause of an admiring world!

CHAPTER VII.

Consideration of the obstacles which impede the operation of the affections which divine revelation is calculated to produce, proceeding, 1. *From confining the attention to certain of the divine attributes;* 2. *From confining the attention to explanations given by men, on points of doubtful interpretation. Illustration.*

So ample is the provision made by Providence, in the promulgation of the gospel, for the cultivation of the benevolent affections, that, by the natural operation of sympathy, these affections must inevitably be produced by a serious contemplation of the objects it presents. And as each of these affections, while it operates, precludes the operation of the selfish principle, it of course follows, that were they all to be constantly and habitually exercised, the selfish principle must be effectually con-

trolled; in which case its attendant passions, envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, &c. could find no entrance into the Christian's breast.

Why, then, does not this blessed result appear? Why does revelation fail to produce this change in the dispositions? Why among Christians do proofs of complete benevolence so rarely occur?

These questions lead to the consideration of two different causes, which operate to hinder us from deriving all the benefits which the spirit of our religion would bestow upon our hearts. A few words will suffice to convey some notion of these.

The obstacles to which I allude will each be found to arise from an habitually erroneous and misguided exercise of attention. To make this clear, let us remember, how entirely the production and the permanence of an affection depends on the degrec

of attention given to the exciting object. It will then be obvious, that in order to produce *all* the benevolent affections, attention must be habitually given to *all* those divine qualities, which, when thus contemplated, are by sympathy transferred into the heart. Now, it is evident, that some of those qualities may be singled out as the peculiar object of attention; and that attention, thus exclusively employed on one object, will produce only that species of emotion which that particular object is calculated to excite. Thus, if, of the divine attributes, we fix on that of infinite mercy as the object of our exclusive attention, our benignity may be thereby increased, but our hearts may, nevertheless, remain strangers to justice and holiness. If in that one idea of mercy, all our notions of Deity are comprised, all the affections which spring from the contemplation of omnipotence, and omniscience, and immutability, may remain defective. Neither the reverential awe which res-

trains from sin, nor the sincere humility which begets charity and good-will, are necessarily to be produced in the contemplation of this single attribute. The benevolent affections will consequently have but a partial operation in our hearts. However we may in that case extol the mercy of God, we shall not "be merciful, even as He is merciful."

In like manner, if we fix our attention exclusively on the infinite power and eternal justice of the Supreme Being, as these attributes are displayed in Scripture, and shut out from our view the ideas of his infinite benignity and mercy; the result will be highly unfavourable to the heart. The sublime emotions of veneration will in this case be superseded by the emotions of abject fear; which, if not accompanied by malignity, are nevertheless destructive of every sympathetic affection. What love can we possibly have for our brethren of the human race, when viewed merely as

objects of divine wrath and indignation; deriving their existence from the power of Omnipotence, for no other purpose than to manifest that power, in dooming them to the sufferings of everlasting misery!

The almsgiving of a person whose notions of Deity are thus confined, is like an appeasing sacrifice, such as the heathens of old were wont to offer to the infernal deities. Stranger to all the tender sympathies, which by a more enlarged contemplation of the divine nature he would have been taught to cherish, he turns abhorrent from the sight of human happiness, shuts his ears to the voice of joy, and, wrapped in clouds of everlasting gloom, imagines that he may best avoid the divine vengeance, by refusing to taste of the divine mercies!

It is needless to pursue the subject any farther; as it is evident, that whichever of the divine attributes are thus made ex-

clusively the object of our attention, the result will be no other than a partial cultivation of some of those affections, which must *all* be cultivated ere genuine benevolence can be produced. Purity and justice are as essential constituents of benevolence, as charity and compassion; but, where the tender affections of pity and generosity are wanting, the love of justice and holiness will not compensate the deficiency.

The inestimable benefit derived from revelation, is, that it presents means of cultivating and improving all the affections equally; but if the means it presents are, when not rejected, only *partially* employed, it is in vain to expect that the purpose for which they were presented can be obtained. Where the affections are but partially cultivated, the selfish principle will be only partially subdued; and hence, among those professing faith in the doctrines of salvation, too many are found,

whose lives or dispositions are at variance with the doctrines they profess.

Another cause remains still to be considered; but, after what has been advanced concerning the operation of the selfish principle, it will be sufficiently illustrated by a few brief remarks. Let us then, in the *first* place, observe, That though the contemplation of all those infinite perfections that shine forth in the views of the divine nature revealed by the Spirit of God, tends to beget in us the correspondent qualities, the contemplation of the notions of men, on mysteries that have not been explained by the Spirit of God, can have no such tendency. By connecting the idea of perfection with what is necessarily imperfect, we not only impose fetters on the reasoning faculty, which God has created free, but, by confining the attention to objects incapable of exciting the emotions of affection, prevent the improvement of the heart.

By contemplating the wisdom of God only through the obscure medium of human wisdom, we learn by degrees to consider the latter as the proper and sole object of our reverence. The opinions we thus revere we implicitly adopt, and may indeed be said to adore; but they are, meanwhile, neither adopted nor adored by any, but those who have, like us, been taught to connect the idea of *divine wisdom* with such opinions, notwithstanding their having originated in human invention; and, consequently, our adoration of them cannot produce those emotions of sympathy which are essential to benevolence. For it is evident that our sympathy must in this case be confined, extending no farther than to those who experience the benefit of that wisdom which we term *divine*, and which we reverence as the wisdom of God; in other words, will extend no farther than to the party with which we have identified ourselves.

Hence arises the danger of those associations which connect the idea of saving faith with any opinion, or abstruse doctrine, originating in the impure source of human invention. The wisdom to which we in this case direct the attention, is not from above, and is consequently imperfect. It is "earthly," and may be converted into a means of gratifying the selfish propensity, justifying the language of the apostle, who describes it as "sensual and devilish;" because, as he observes, "where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work." In opposition to this, he describes the wisdom that is derived from a superior source, as "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

While, therefore, we consider ourselves or others to be religious, in proportion to the ardour with which we embrace, and the zeal with which we defend any pecu-

liar tenets, there is little likelihood, or rather, indeed, there is scarce a possibility, that those benevolent affections, which are the fruits of the Spirit, should be introduced to our hearts; for these subtleties, or abstract propositions, however they may delight the imagination, are incapable of exciting the emotions of sympathy, and consequently our attachment to them cannot exercise or improve the sympathetic affections. It, on the contrary, tends to lessen the sphere, and to limit the operation of our benevolence, by inducing us to think harshly, and uncharitably, and unjustly, of those who hold not the same opinions, even though they worship God according to their conscience, with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and with all their understandings.

Instead, therefore, of being surprised that the religion of Christ should not have produced universally correspondent effects upon the hearts of Christians, if we consi-

der the pains taken by the zealots of every sect, to direct the attention of its members to the peculiar notions by which it is distinguished, and to represent faith in the efficacy of these notions as essential to salvation, we may rather be astonished, that, under these disadvantages, the preaching of the gospel should have produced the beneficial consequences that have evidently attended it. But as it is only the knowledge of God communicated by divine revelation, that produces the correspondent affections of piety and benevolence, wherever these affections are evidently conspicuous, we may safely infer, that, in such instances, however erroneous may have been the speculative opinions that have given their form and colouring to the mode of faith, the heart has not rested in these, but has risen to the contemplation of all-perfect righteousness. If such have obeyed the command of their divine Master, and given their hearts to God, they are of the blessed number with whom all true Christians hold

communion at the throne of grace, where misjudging reason is compassionated, and faithfulness finds mercy and acceptance.

Want of charity is not, however, a mere error of judgment, it is a sin of the heart: it is the offspring of the selfish principle; and if it is produced and nurtured by an overweaning attachment to any peculiar notions or speculative opinions, concerning points that have not been explicitly revealed, such attachment must necessarily be dangerous, tending to frustrate the benefits derived from divine revelation, as a means of subjugating the selfish principle, and of cultivating the benevolent affections.

It will not be denied, that forms of religion, and modes of worship and of doctrine, are more or less pure, in proportion to the degree in which they correspond with divine revelation; but the perception of this correspondence is an operation of intellect, and in many instances requires

such a laborious investigation of abstract propositions, as few are capable of prosecuting. The truth of these propositions must therefore be, by the greater number of persons, taken upon trust. Nor can any evil result from this, so long as they are considered merely in the light of speculative opinions, to which a certain number of wise and learned men have given their assent, while the more important truths which have been revealed by the Spirit of God to all men, and to which all who believe the gospel must subscribe, are set forth as the objects of that faith which is necessary to salvation.

It is not, therefore, from exercising the powers of our understandings, on the probable meaning of what in divine revelation seems mysterious or obscure, that our benevolence becomes contracted; but from confining our attention to those obscure mysteries, and connecting all our ideas of religion with the notions that are thus en-

gendered. And it is from the universality of this practice, that darkness has so long been permitted to cover the earth. Conceiving faith in certain notions and opinions, (notions and opinions framed and formed by human intellect), to be essential to salvation, those to whom the tidings of salvation are tidings of great joy, either implicitly adopt the opinions of the teachers they revere, or, directing the whole powers of their intellect to the investigation of points that have been differently interpreted by opposite parties, abide by the explanation that appears to them most consonant to reason. Thus, in either instance, it is still to the operations of human reason that they resort, and it is what human reason has fabricated, that becomes the object of their faith.

But what must be the result of a faith, which, from the nature of the human mind, can never possibly become universal? It has for its object that which is neither pure,

nor perfect, nor permanent. By every fresh accession of light it is liable to be altered in its form, and, like all things human, must finally pass away. How different, in this respect, from that divine object of true Christian faith, in which we contemplate excellencies and perfections eternally to be adored, and in the benefit derived from which every human heart may participate! In the latter instance, whatever tends to augment and to confirm our faith, tends also to increase the exercise of our benevolent affections. While, on the contrary, whatever tends to confirm our faith and confidence in the saving efficacy of any peculiar notions, tends to limit the sphere and contract the operation of our sympathies. That this is the natural effect of bigotry is obvious. The God of the bigot is not the God of the universe; he is merely the God of a certain number of individuals who subscribe the same creed; and to the worshippers of this local divinity the good-will of the bigot is confined.

When zeal for any human inventions has unfortunately been permitted to take possession of our hearts, we are apt, like the Jew of old, to excuse our want of charity, by asking, "Who is our neighbour?" and, like him, are mortified to hear of the good deeds done by the Samaritan, who comes not up to our temple to worship! We cannot bear to see light dispensed, unless the torch has been kindled from the fire of our own particular altar. We hate and vilify the good deeds of our fellow-creatures, unless their labours redound to the glory of that sect in the glory of which we participate; and, like the apostles, before the Holy Ghost had inspired their hearts, when we see men casting out devils in the name of Christ, "we forbid them, because they follow not with us!"

But, as was before observed, these effects are not described as the necessary consequence of directing our attention to those passages in holy writ that are of difficult in-

terpretation, and which, like all other objects of speculative inquiry, must be decided upon according to the notions conceived of them by their investigators. Such researches, in as far as they afford exercise to the higher faculties of the understanding, are not only harmless but useful, so long as the notions and opinions that result from them have no farther importance attached to them, than what belongs to the notions and opinions of blind, and erring, and fallible beings. To such must all our peculiar notions concerning the true meaning of mysterious passages be ultimately traced. They have been struck out by the power of abstract reasoning enjoyed by a few speculative men. How would the benefit of divine revelation have been limited, had they been rendered communicable only through such a medium?

Blessed be the Author of our salvation! —through the tender mercy of our God, whereby "the day-spring from on high

hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace," that light was made to shine into the heart; and thus, while the power of exercising the higher faculties of the understanding was still permitted to remain dependant on the ordinary means of cultivation, we were, by miraculous interpositions, provided with additional means of cultivating the pious and benevolent affections! It was thus, that "the mercy promised to our fathers" was accomplished, to the end "*that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life.*"

As the intellectual powers are, in the great proportion of mankind, imperfectly developed, it might, *a priori*, have been expected, that a religion intended for the benefit of mankind universally, would be adapted to the powers which are, in the generality of persons, developed and ex-

ercised by attention to the common affairs of life.

It was to men in this situation, men incapable of exerting any but the primary faculties of the understanding, that the discourses of our divine Master were addressed. The objects to which he directed the attention of his humble auditors were within the scope of those faculties, and afforded to them an appropriate exercise. He required not from those he vouchsafed to instruct, the exercise of powers which they did not possess. The evidences of his divine mission were rendered level to the capacity of the unenlightened, for they appealed to the judgment through the medium of the senses. But they appealed also to the heart: For, as it was not merely to the proofs of supernatural power, and supernatural wisdom, displayed in the miracles he wrought, that he directed the attention, but to the proofs of divine benevolence exhibited in the application of

that power and wisdom, he thus presented to their contemplation qualities, which, as they are the natural objects of sympathy, produce the emotion of affection. The power manifested in giving sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf, and even in restoring the dead to life, though they were evidently acts of beneficence and mercy, was not considered by our Saviour as a complete evidence of his divine mission; for these were acts of which the benefit was only partially experienced: But, that he who was thus highly endowed, should "preach the gospel to the poor," was a decisive proof, that the blessings he came to communicate were universal in their nature, and to be communicated universally to all who were disposed to receive them. In the immediate prospect of his sufferings and death, he promised to his disciples, that they should be miraculously endowed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, should descend into their hearts,

and bring all that he had taught to their remembrance. But by what course was the inestimable blessing to be obtained? Was it by applying the powers of the mind to the comprehension of abstract propositions? Was it by embracing and maintaining peculiar notions, and explanations of mysteries, which God in his wisdom had not thought proper to unveil? Or was it in the sturdy rejection of all in the providence of God, that was not level to the capacity of the inquirer, that men were to qualify themselves for becoming the peculiar objects of divine favour? No. Happily for us, our Saviour, in reply to a question from one of the disciples, explained himself so explicitly, as to leave no doubt upon the subject: "Jesus answered and said, If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him:" Again, "These things I command you, that ye love one another."

Have we not here a test whereby to try the importance of every doctrine proposed to us? Can we presume to say, that any notions or opinions of uninspired men are essentially important, if such notions or opinions have no tendency to improve or exercise the benevolent affections, which all that was taught or commanded by our Saviour, has a direct tendency to improve?

Religion includes a knowledge of the relation in which we stand to the Supreme Being, and of the duties which spring from these relations; and divine revelation not only affords this knowledge, but supplies such means of cultivating the affections, as enable us to perform the duties in which it instructs us. To a proper application of those means, producing in us holiness and purity, benignity and mercy, humility and meekness, an ardent desire of improving in virtue, and forbearance, and forgiveness, and patience, and fortitude, and resigna-

tion to the divine will, and confidence in the divine mercy, peculiar blessings were promised by the Author and Finisher of our redemption. But to an ardent thirst after the knowledge of the secrets of Providence, not explicitly revealed, where do we find reason to expect a blessing? Concerning himself, or the merciful designs of Providence accomplished in his sufferings and death, he instructed his disciples no farther than was necessary in order to excite that faith in him as the MESSIAH, which could not exist without producing affections corresponding to the spirit of his precepts. To this faith was promised a resurrection from the dead to life eternal. And do we boast of our superior piety in daring to alter the conditions of this promise? Have we the temerity to set up any hypothesis invented by weak and fallible men, as a substitute for that faith to which the Son of God has given the promise of immortality? Let us reflect on the fatal and inevitable consequences. By

turning the attention of those on whom we have influence, from the contemplation of truths which have an immediate tendency to improve the heart, to hypotheses which have no such tendency, we do what in us lies to render the gospel dispensation abortive. We may thus, indeed, enjoy the glory of converting many to our own opinions; but would we enjoy the greater glory of turning many to righteousness, we must direct them to the pure source of all knowledge and of all perfection!

However wise or excellent the precepts and rules of life we endeavour to inculcate, when we associate the idea of saving faith with the belief of any hypothesis of human invention, we render these precepts nugatory; for the object of faith having, in this instance, no tendency to produce the emotions of affection, cannot be instrumental in the improvement of the heart, by exercising the benevolent sympathies; and, consequently, however excellent the pre-

cepts which we enjoin, as connected with these peculiar notions, and as deriving from them a peculiar efficacy, they must fail to have that influence which they would have produced, had the heart been prepared for their reception.

Let us, then, with respect to all notions that owe their present form to human ingenuity and invention, be content to propose them as proper objects of investigation to those who possess the faculties requisite for examining them. But as far as our influence extends, let us endeavour to direct the attention of all within its sphere to objects that have a manifest tendency at once to enlighten the understanding and improve the heart;—objects that may be contemplated by all who are in possession of the gospel.

CHAPTER VIII.

Consideration of the means afforded in the positive institutions of religion, for cultivating the benevolent affections. Comparison of the principles derived from sympathy with the opinions of mankind, and the principles derived from religion. Conclusion.

FROM the nature of the human mind, affections that are not habitually exercised become so weak as to be with difficulty excited. For the habitual exercise of piety and benevolence, we may therefore expect that divine revelation, if intended to afford an additional means of cultivating those affections, would make some provision. It is then of great importance to inquire, how far the ordinances, which, according to the authority of Scripture, were of divine appointment, seem calculated to exercise these affections, and consequently to confirm and

increase the influence of the moral qualities that are declared to be the object of divine favour.

Anterior to the institution of the Jewish law, the worship of the Supreme Being had been enjoined on all to whom the knowledge of the ubiquity of the Godhead had been communicated. But it was not until the Mosaic dispensation, that any special ceremonies were appointed. Let us now inquire, what were the affections to which the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law were calculated to afford habitual exercise?

The more minutely we investigate the subject, the more clearly shall we perceive, that all the rites and ceremonies of the law were calculated either to inspire confidence in the divine mercy, by reminding those to whom it was addressed of former instances of the divine favour and protection; or to impress them with reverence for the God of holiness, as their God and Lawgiver; or

to humble them by a sense of their own unworthiness, and of the necessity of an intercessor between beings polluted by sin, and their all-righteous Judge.

In the commandments, which exhibited a summary of the law, attention was in the first place directed to the nature and perfections of the Supreme Being, to whom an undivided homage was to be paid, and to whose name ideas of profound reverence were to be unceasingly attached. And in order that the impressions made upon the heart by these views of the divine nature, might not be effaced by the occupations and amusements of life, attention was to be recalled from these inferior objects on every seventh day; and that day set apart, throughout all generations, as devoted to the Lord. The effects thus produced upon the heart were not to be barren and unfruitful. Their existence was to be proved in their conduct to those who, according to the law of nature, were the first

objects on which the affections of the heart are exercised; and in the strict observance of justice, and purity, and sincerity, and disinterestedness, in all their dealings with their fellow-creatures.

It could not then be ascribed to any deficiency in respect to the adequacy of the means afforded for the cultivation of the benevolent affections, if these appeared in the Jews to be defective; but in their want of attention to those objects which were by the divine favour so forcibly urged upon their notice. If the glory of the divine Majesty was to them veiled in clouds of terror, in the righteousness of the law, and in the wisdom and benignity displayed in the works of creation and providence, they were still presented with objects calculated to exercise and improve all the pious and benevolent affections. Wherever this necessary degree of attention was bestowed, the correspondent affections were accordingly produced; as is

proved to demonstration in numerous passages of Scripture history.

But, as the institutions of the Mosaic law were only preparatory to a more perfect display of the divine perfections, viewing the gospel dispensation as an extension of the means supernaturally afforded for the cultivation of the affections, it becomes of infinite importance to inquire, whether its institutions so far correspond with this idea as to throw additional light upon the scheme of Providence, in as far as we are individually interested in that scheme? For so far, and no farther, has the wisdom of God been pleased to render it level to our comprehensions.

The positive institutions of our religion are few and simple. But, that they are eminently calculated for improving, by a perpetual exercise, all the pious and benevolent affections of the human heart, will, on a moment's consideration, be obvious.

Prayer, though positively enjoined by our Lord, cannot be properly considered as an institution, it being the natural and almost inevitable consequence of belief in the existence and omnipresence of God. But, through the Messiah, such additional motives were afforded to these aspirations of the heart, as render their frequent repetition the necessary consequence of faith in his divine mission. In being thus encouraged to the frequent use of the most inestimable privilege we can enjoy, we have the most cogent proof of the divine benignity. For what are the effects which prayer naturally produces upon the heart? If the contemplation of the divine attributes be naturally productive of correspondent emotions and affections, prayer, as a means of calling the attention to these attributes, must necessarily give to those affections habitual exercise. In prayer, the moral perfections of Deity are not only contemplated as abstract truths, they are adored as the sure foundation of hope and confi-

dence; and as the ideas of infinite power, wisdom, holiness, justice, immutability, and mercy, are, in our addresses to our heavenly Father, connected with the gracious promises in which we are deeply and individually interested, they cannot be thus adored without producing a correspondent influence on our hearts.

We may, indeed, lose these inestimable benefits, by withholding our attention from those objects which are in prayer presented to our contemplation. We may "ask and receive not, because we ask amiss." We may, in our addresses to the Giver of all good, direct our attention to objects that occupy the desires of our corrupt hearts, and which, if granted, would tend only to magnify the idea of self. We may, instead of that adoration of the divine wisdom which produces steadfast confidence in the divine government, and implicit submission to the divine will, attempt to instruct the wisdom of the Omniscient, by recounting our own

notions and opinions. We may, in acknowledging his power, earnestly desire that that power may be exerted to destroy those whom we hate or fear; and, in returning thanks to God for his mercies, may rejoice that we are more righteous than our neighbours, and desire the Searcher of hearts to notice how much more strictly than others we observe his commandments. But all this only proves, that prayer, like all the other means of cultivating those affections, which, in their exercise, constitute spiritual and moral improvement, may be so perverted as to be rendered ineffectual.

Of the benefits that naturally result from that contemplation of the divine perfections which takes place in every serious act of devotion, we have given a very brief account; and imperfectly as they have been delineated, they appear inestimable. But they extend infinitely beyond what has yet been mentioned. When we hold communion with God in prayer, we not only

contemplate the perfections of his nature, but obtain just and salutary notions of our own. The consciousness of our wants and weaknesses, our sins and imperfections, our continual need of pardon and assistance; a consciousness with which the heart must inevitably be impressed in contemplating what is expected of us by him who has condescended to instruct us in our duty, must not only annihilate for the moment every emotion of pride and self-love, but increase the operation of every benevolent affection.

We are taught to forgive our enemies, as we hope to be forgiven by the God of mercies; and to love our brethren of mankind, as God has loved us. In the exercise of prayer, those affections are excited which we are commanded to exhibit in action, and consequently they must, by habitual devotion, be rendered the permanent disposition of our hearts. The means are in this instance so exquisitely adapted to

the end, that it would require more than common sophistry to elude the force of the inference.

Whatever has been said of prayer, as a means of cultivating and improving the benevolent affections, will be found to apply with still additional force to the institution of the Eucharist. In this most solemn act of devotion, the objects contemplated are of a nature to excite the purest emotions of which the human heart is susceptible. It is here alone that the sympathetic affections have consentaneous and unbounded exercise. Here alone, that the tender emotions of love, sorrow, and gratitude, are combined, yet not lessened, by feelings of reverential awe. Here alone, that the sublime emotions of veneration are accompanied with the animation of joyful hope, and heart-supporting confidence. Here, that the feelings of compunction and remorse, divested of their bitterness, are transmuted into that dignified

humility, which increases the operation of all the social and benevolent affections.

Is there ought, to which we attach the ideas of amiable or excellent, that may not be expected from the man in whose heart all the affections which this divine institution is calculated to produce, are habitually exercised? And does not this view of the correspondence between the nature of the effects resulting from the positive institution, and the nature and tendency of all that has been revealed, convince us, that the plan of our redemption was laid in the councils of divine wisdom; and that, in extending the means of cultivating the affections of the heart, it in some measure restores our nature to its pristine dignity.

But clear as are the characters of divine mercy exhibited in the institutions of the gospel, He who knew our frailty, and remembered that we were but dust, did not leave us solely dependent on our own ex-

ertions. By the promise of divine assistance to be granted consequent on our making use of the means so graciously afforded by nature and revelation, for cultivating the pious and benevolent affections, he animated us with the hopes of being finally successful in our warfare with the selfish principle, and all its attendant passions. In the institution of baptism, a significant emblem of this promise is presented: In the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, it was ratified and confirmed; and by its conspicuous effects upon their hearts, in purifying and delivering them from the dominion of the selfish principle, and implanting in its stead all the pious, and generous, and benevolent affections, the nature of the benefit to be derived from that divine assistance is displayed.

But it was not to conspicuous operations of the divine Spirit that the promise was limited, nor, if we put any faith on the promises of God, can we believe,

that when these ceased, its assisting influence was withdrawn. Where the affections which it then miraculously produced exist in the heart, we are commanded to expect, that devout supplication for the assistance which is necessary to maintain and to extend their influence, will procure to us the inestimable blessing, whose fruits are an increase of love, and peace, and joy! Far from differing in its nature or tendency from the other means afforded by divine revelation for the improvement of the affections, it only gives to these means a superior efficacy, and thus extends and confirms the advantages derived from them.

Let us now compare, in point of solid worth and usefulness, the qualities derived from directing the attention to the infinite Source of all perfection, with qualities derived from a secondary source.

Few qualities excite greater admiration than heroic fortitude. Let us examine the nature of that fortitude which is inspired by sympathy with the feelings and opinions of the world. Depending on that sympathy for its existence, it acts so long, and no longer, than the sympathy on which it rests is supposed to exist. When a man supposes, that the latest actions of his life will be exposed to scrutiny, he may exert this species of fortitude even to his dying hour; and, extending the idea of self, reap a gratification from contemplating the glory that will result to his character from the undaunted firmness with which he meets his fate. But let him be placed in circumstances where his fortitude and pusillanimity are alike secured from observation, and where there is none to admire and approve, what will become of the firmness, the foundation of which has thus been demolished?

Let us compare with this the fortitude derived from trust in the protecting arm of Omnipotence, from humble confidence in the never-failing mercies of the Disposer of events, and from an assured hope of everlasting life, and we can be at no loss where to give the preference. In the former instance, fortitude is dependent upon circumstances; in the latter, it is superior to every circumstance, and is never exerted with greater energy than when the smiles or notice of the world is withdrawn.

We may, in like manner, compare the integrity inspired, and habitually exercised, by contemplating the immutable truth and justice, which eternally dwell in Him "to whom all hearts are open," with that species of integrity which is derived from sympathy with the opinion of our fellow-creatures. The principle of integrity will be found, in the latter instance, to be shaped according to the pattern exhibited in the opinions and notions of those with whom

we live. Sympathy in the sentiments of our associates being the only rule of action, the measure of our integrity will vary according to circumstances. Thus, even among thieves, the principle of integrity may not be wanting; but among thieves it is bounded to the single point of abstaining from committing depredations on the property of members of the same gang.

In the lower orders, from the little pains taken to implant in their hearts the qualities of truth and justice, we need not be surprised to find their notions of integrity to be fluctuating and limited; in some instances, bounded by the fear of incurring the penalties of the law, but, in general, formed only by sympathy with the notions and feelings of neighbours and companions. Certain breaches of honesty and truth are thus held in abhorrence, while others, equally atrocious, are deemed but venial errors, and never punished by remorse. Nor is it in the lower orders only, that the integrity

which is dependant on sympathy is the only rule of conduct.

The law of honour, as described by Dr Paley, "is a system of rules constructed by people of fashion, and calculated to facilitate their intercourse with one another, and for no other purpose; consequently, nothing is adverted to by the law of honour, but what tends to incommode this intercourse. Hence this law only prescribes and regulates the duties betwixt equals, omitting such as relate to the Supreme Being, as well as those which we owe to our inferiors."

The man who pays strict attention to all that is implied in the law of honour, will doubtless avoid those actions which it prohibits, and thereby avoid disgracing himself in the opinion of his equals. But with regard to transactions in which his equals are not concerned, he considers himself at liberty to follow the dictates of his avarice,

his appetites, or his caprice. Though, in his conduct to his inferiors, he is guided by no principle of equity or justice, destroying the fruits of their labour without recompense, and enjoying the benefit of their services without reward, he does not thereby commit a breach of the law of honour, and therefore flatters himself that he is an honourable man. "So are they all—all honourable men!"

Even with regard to veracity, the law of honour is a rule of mere convenience. It imposes no troublesome restraints upon the faculty of invention, and is therefore frequently appealed to by the habitual liar, who imagines he may indulge himself in fabricating what stories he pleases, provided he makes up his mind to stake his life against the life of him who dares to speak a truth in telling him he lies. If he comes victorious from the combat, he persuades himself that he is still an honourable man!

The law of honour, as it is merely a conventional law, founded on no higher principle than convenience, and deriving its sole support from public opinion, must necessarily be formed according to the opinions that generally prevail in that class to whom it is a rule of action. According as the morals of that part of the community are pure or depraved, the law of honour will be so constructed, as to demand or to dispense with the fulfilment of moral obligation. Thus honour, given as a pledge, will rise or sink in value, according to the notions of moral obligation that prevail among those for whose use the law of honour has been constructed. When these notions are lax and depraved, we need not be surprised to find, that the honour of a soldier and a gentleman, when pledged as a prisoner of war, should prove but a slight security for the fulfilment of a solemn engagement!

With this versatile rule of conduct let us compare that principle of integrity, whose foundations are laid on the immutable truth and immaculate justice of the Supreme Being, in whom we live, and to whom we are to be finally responsible for our conduct. But, indeed, they will not bear comparison. With more propriety might we compare the feeble glimmering of a taper with the splendour of the meridian sun!

The integrity which is supported by principles of everlasting authority, has no limits, is incapable of vacillation. In action, it is guided by one simple rule, of doing to others what immutable justice would demand as proper to be done by others, in similar circumstances. It is impossible to imagine a situation, in which a person continually influenced by such principles should fail in the discharge of any obligation, positive or implied.

I shall, for the sake of my female readers, add one farther illustration.

Much as they hear of the necessity of being, or of appearing to be amiable; much as it is now the fashion to consider an engaging softness of manners as a complete representation of all the virtues, of which it is at best an inefficient substitute; it is of some importance to show, in what respects the sign differs from the thing signified.

Condescension and affability, mildness, gentleness, and cordiality; the humility which produces respectful attention to others, and the modesty which veils, while it enhances every merit, are qualities held in universal estimation. But so long as these qualities are no less admired than esteemed, the semblance of them will be assumed by those who are actuated by the love of praise; and as long as they are means of procuring admiration, the appear-

ance will be supported. There can be no doubt that the manners may, in this case, be rendered truly amiable; for the greater the desire of admiration, with so much more attention will the manners of those who are set up as models for imitation, be studied, and imitated. The effect produced upon the spectators, by the successful imitation of the signs of qualities that are the objects of sympathy, may perhaps be fully equal to that produced by the reality: But what is the effect produced upon the mind of the person who has thus happily succeeded in modelling her manners to the approved pattern? Is the heart thereby rendered more susceptible of the emotions of affection? Does the practice of exhibiting the external signs of gentleness, kindness, and humility, so effectually restrain the impulses of pride and vanity, as to render the mind truly humble, and the temper truly meek? Is it not possible, that the consciousness of exciting admiration, by the *appearance* of sweetness, and conde-

scension, and sensibility, may afford such gratification to the selfish principle, as to increase its influence; and thus be the means of introducing passions, the very opposite of those virtues, in the imitation of which the candidate for admiration so much excels? In this case it is evident, that the facility of assuming the appearance of affections that have no existence in the breast, may become a snare to the soul, and, instead of improving the heart, present an effectual obstacle to its improvement.

It is farther to be observed, that the laws of politeness are, like the laws of honour, "a system of rules constructed by people of fashion, and calculated to facilitate their intercourse with each other, and for no other purpose." In answering this purpose they have a certain value; but even when best understood, and most punctually adhered to, they do not imply the existence of any of the social or benevolent affec-

tions; for they may be understood and practised by the faithless wife, the bad mother, the unjust and tyrannical mistress of a family, the selfish and unfeeling prodigal. They are, besides, so far from being fixed and permanent, that they are subject to perpetual change, fluctuating according to the capricious and ever-varying standard of opinion.

The appearance of interesting and estimable qualities will, therefore, be assumed by those whose highest aim is to obtain the praise of having formed their manners according to the admired model, no longer than while the indication of such qualities has the sanction of fashion. Let the opinions of the fashionable world undergo a change; let modesty and reserve fall into contempt, and impudence obtain the meed of admiration; and every appearance of that modesty which naturally springs from purity and innocence will be quickly discarded. She who, while modesty was in vogue,

seemed sedulous to shroud her charms from observation, will now, unblushingly, expose her person to the public gaze, and glory in appearing callous to the feelings of shame, and the voice of censure!

Again, Let the qualities exhibited in the admired model cease to be of the benevolent class, and may we not perceive with what facility the appearance of courteousness, and affability, and gentleness, and lively interest in the feelings of others, will be exchanged for the frigid air of proud reserve, and the haughtiness of selfish indifference!

Such are the consequences of leaving the youthful mind dependant on sympathy with the notions and opinions of any particular description of persons, for the acquirement of qualities that are, in every point of view, with regard to our happiness in this life and the life to come, of the last importance. By devoting attention to the shadow, the substance of virtue is lost. The advantages,

which the circumstances in which the sex are placed peculiarly afford for the cultivation of the pious and benevolent affections, are rendered of no avail, and, instead of being joyfully acknowledged, and gratefully improved, are permitted to escape observation As far as precept goes, few among that class of readers to whom I now particularly address myself, are destitute of moral and religious instruction. But, according to the view we have been taking of the principles of our nature, it appears that it is of little consequence to have the doctrines of religion impressed upon the memory, if the ideas connected with religion produce no emotions of affection in the heart. It is not merely by learning to repeat a creed, or by the habitual observance of external forms of devotion, but by serious and habitual attention to the excellencies and perfections of the divine nature, as they are in Scripture presented to our contemplation, that we can alone acquire habits and dispositions correspond-

ing to the character of religion, and which, wherever they exist, are displayed in the perpetual exercise of the pious and benevolent affections. For the development of those affections nature has provided a source, in the reciprocations of kindness and tender sympathy, in the endearing intercourses of domestic life. But as this provision made by nature may be neglected or perverted, it ought to be the theme of endless gratitude, that we are no longer left dependant on this source for the sensibility which is essential to the improvement of the heart; God having, in his infinite mercy, afforded in divine revelation effectual means of cultivating and improving all the excellent and estimable qualities of which our nature is susceptible.

Where love to God, and good-will to man, are thus implanted, the law of kindness will be found written, not in the manners only, but in the heart. Love will be without dissimulation, and courtesy without parade.

The desire to please will remain, and be discernible; but, purified from unworthy motives, it will flow from the desire of promoting social happiness; a desire inseparable from the exercise of the benevolent and social affections.

The virtues which are thus to be rooted and grounded in the heart, are principles of eternal obligation. They are neither susceptible of change nor alteration; but, like the source from which they emanate, are "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!"

CONCLUSION.

It is impossible to place the importance of cultivating the benevolent affections in a stronger point of view, than that in which it appears when considered as having been deemed worthy of divine interposition. But as he who, in the plenitude of benignity, bestowed "the means of grace and the hope of glory," is the Creator and Governor of all things, in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, we may expect to find, in the works of creation and in the laws of nature, in the ordinary as well as in the extraordinary dispensations of Providence, indications of the same tendency of design: For it is impossible to imagine, that harmony and con-

gruity can fail to be exhibited in what proceeds from a Being infinite in all perfection.

The whole of the scheme of Providence is far removed beyond the sphere to which human intellect is confined. But with respect to the provision made for our improvement in knowledge and our advancement in grace, we have only to inquire, in order to obtain such conceptions of its nature and extent, as may essentially promote our happiness: and as I am thoroughly convinced that our inquiries, if directed to this single point, would serve to throw new light on many of those dispensations which we are apt to term gloomy and severe, I shall conclude by suggesting a few hints upon the subject.

It will without difficulty be admitted, that the emotions excited by the beauty and sublimity discernible in the material world, correspond with the emotions of af-

fection; and that, consequently, the pleasure derived from contemplating what is sublime or beautiful in nature, is an exercise of the affections in which it has its source. In the inexhaustible variety of objects thus formed to delight the imagination and the heart, we perceive an inexhaustible provision made for exercising affections of the benevolent class; and readily acknowledge, that in the profuse liberality with which nature has provided for this pure enjoyment, an argument is presented of the benignity of the Creator. But when we turn our eyes to scenes of a different description,—when we contemplate the calamities of life, and enumerate "the ills that flesh is heir to," we stand appalled, and, unable to reconcile these appearances of evil with our notions of infinite benevolence, are apt, notwithstanding all the aid afforded by revelation, covertly to have recourse to the idea of an opposing principle, to solve the difficulty.

Instead of yielding to such suggestions, let us inquire how far the evils that appal us deserve to be considered as indications of the wrath, hatred, and indignation of an offended Deity, or as proofs of the mercy and benignity of the divine nature.

If our state in this world be a state of trial and probation,—if the little kingdom within the breast be divided against itself, —and if our eternal happiness be dependant on the issue of the conflict, it must, I think, be evident, that whatever tends to strengthen and support that principle, whose final triumph is to produce an infinitely preponderating good, is in reality a good, and not an evil. Let us then inquire, whether there be, in the appointment of Providence, any species of calamity, that does not either tend to lessen the influence and arrest the operation of the selfish principle, or to increase the influence of the benevolent affections; or, rather, that does not tend to produce both these effects?

The variety of mental and corporeal sufferings to which we are in this life exposed, may be divided into two classes: *First*, Those attached to our condition as frail and perishable beings, and to which all are liable; and, *Secondly*, Those which proceed from the operation of the selfish and vindictive passions in our own breasts, or in the breasts of others. These are equally of divine appointment, though, to our narrow view, it is in the former only that we see the hand of God. But if the calamities that are inflicted by the wickedness of man have a tendency to check the arrogance of pride, and to restrain that impulse to enlarge the idea of self from which pride and vanity derive their poison, they are evidently calculated to produce a preponderance of good to the sufferer, as means of improving his heart. It is the fault of him who suffers, if he does not make a proper use of the benefit. If, instead of contemplating the calamities he experiences, as resulting from a principle of depravity to which

his heart is subject, he indulges in those malignant feelings of hatred and revenge which are operations of the same principle, he will indeed reap no advantage from his afflictions; but that by no means alters the nature of the dispensation. If it had not been perverted from its natural and proper use, it would have answered the same end as afflictions of any other description, and by improving his heart, and affording exercise to the virtues of humility, charity, and forgiveness, have been means of working out for him an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It is indeed by divine revelation only, that we are taught to make such use of the evils inflicted on us by the malice of our fellow-creatures. But the discovery of the advantages that may be derived from such afflictions, is an additional argument in favour of the divine origin of that gospel of glad tidings, which, by the light it affords, teaches how to convert the evil devices of man into substantial blessings; and enables us to perceive, that those very

evils correspond in their effects to all the other parts of the general plan of Providence.

In this point of view, the dire calamities of war, the miseries inflicted by tyranny and oppression, and the sufferings experienced from impious persecution, are all equally reconcileable to our ideas of the infinite benignity of the Disposer of all events; and we readily acknowledge that these, by exercising our fortitude, patience, humility, and resignation, may produce for us, upon the whole, a preponderance of good. But it is more difficult to bring us to consider, in the same point of view, evils the same in kind, though differing in degree, when these happen to be dealt to us individually, and in suffering of which we are neither supported by the example, nor encouraged by the sympathy of numerous fellow-sufferers. Unmindful of the benefit to be extracted from the suffering, we are apt, in this case, to complain of the

hardship of our particular lot; and thus, instead of directing our attention to those corrupt affections and desires of our own hearts, which required chastisement, we permit our thoughts to dwell on the injustice, cruelty, malice, or ingratitude manifested by our enemies, and thus increase the evil propensities which affliction would have effectually corrected. But here, again, we, by our own depraved will, obstruct the natural course of things, and pervert the natural uses of affliction from their intended purpose, to answer a purpose for which they were not intended.

Let us now turn our eyes to pain, sickness, and sorrow, afflictions to which we are exposed by our condition, and which may be and are, in general, inflicted without the aid of human agency. In these calamities, those who know not God, or who take a superficial view of the scheme of Providence, perceive only the effects of divine wrath, or of blind chance, or of a

deficiency in the wisdom and goodness of the Governor of the universe. But if we seriously examine the nature of those calamities, we shall discover in them such evident proofs of divine benignity, as shall convert our murmurs and lamentations into hosannahs of joy and admiration.

Though the sufferings brought upon us by the hatred, malice, or injustice of our fellow-creatures, have all a manifest tendency to lessen the idea of self in our breasts, and to curb and restrain the operation of the selfish principle; where that principle has been strengthened by indulgence, it does not yield without a struggle, and, unless the affections have been previously cultivated, rises upon opposition, either into the fury of resentment or the horrors of despair.* Sickness and sor-

* *Query*—Is there any instance of suicide, that may not be obviously traced to the feelings arising from some sudden check given to the gratification of the propensity to magnify the idea of self?

row being considered as the immediate visitations of heaven, are not liable to be thus perverted; but, on the contrary, while they have a tendency to diminish the influence of the selfish principle, have a correspondent tendency to increase the influence of the benevolent affections in our hearts.

Behold the proud man, bending in anguish over the lifeless corse of a darling child, and observe whether the pride by which he is in general influenced does not receive a salutary check from sorrow? While the heart is thus subdued by grief, the propensity to enlarge the idea of self by the fondly cherished notion of superiority, is laid to rest, and, were a perfect use made of the opportunity thus mercifully granted, would be completely vanquished. Let us observe the tyrant, when torn by anxiety and apprehension for the life of perhaps the only being whom his hard heart has ever loved. If the compunctious visitings of nature do not, in these mo-

ments, conquer the infernal impulses of cruelty, he is rather to be considered as a monster than as a being susceptible of moral improvement.

But these are extreme cases. Let us descend to common life, and observe the effects produced by tender sorrow, on hearts not yet rendered callous by the indulgence of the selfish principle, though, *as human*, still in some degree subject to its influence. That grief has a powerful tendency to lessen the influence of that principle, is obvious. By the feeling of deprivation, the idea of self is diminished to its just proportions: Pride and arrogance are, for the moment, annihilated: All those ideas of superiority in which the heart so vainly gloried, vanish even from the memory; and a sense of the consolation derived from sympathy, produces gratitude and benevolence towards all who sympathize in the sorrows that rend the heart. And though, when piety is wanting, those ef-

fects of the chastisements of affliction will be limited, and the benefit in this case but temporary, it is nevertheless so conspicuous as to justify the assertion, that sorrow is appointed by Providence as a means of improvement to the human heart. The beneficial tendency of affliction will be further evident, from considering, that, although "light has come into the world," there are many who "prefer darkness to light," or who do not perceive the advantages of that light, because they do not contemplate those advantages with the attention requisite. If the sorrow occasioned by the loss of what is dear to us on earth, has a manifest tendency to direct our attention to that light through which we have the means of obtaining everlasting glory, its efficacy will no longer admit of doubt. And that this has been experienced by numbers, cannot be denied.

But even of those that firmly believe the gospel, who is there that gives sufficient

attention to the objects it presents? When, by the sudden rupture of those endearing cords of sympathy which bound the beloved object to our hearts, and by the annihilation of all those hopes and fears inseparable from attachment, and by which we have been habitually animated, we become in a manner desolate, and seem bereft of all that gave pleasure to existence, the heart that has been instructed in the nature of God naturally turns for consolation to the contemplation of his goodness. Awed into reverence by the experience of his irresistible power, the tender emotions of love, increased by contemplating all the amiable and endearing qualities of the being from whom we have been separated, produce an involuntary hope that he still lives, and that he now enjoys, and will ever continue to enjoy, a happier state of existence than can be enjoyed in a world full of misery. And so natural is this hope, so congenial is it to the human mind, that there are, in this country at least, few in-

stances of a scepticism so determined as to be capable of resisting it.

But in the breast of him who is so happy as to have unbounded faith in the promises of God, and hope and confidence in the merits and mediation of a divine Saviour, the deprivation of an earthly blessing is productive of emotions that are neither transient nor fruitless, but have a lasting influence on the heart and conduct. In such a mind, sorrow concentrates the affections which are so apt to wander, and fixes them on things above. By experience of the vicissitudes of this ever-changing scene, the heart is elevated to the contemplation of that sublime Object who is alone eternal and immutable, and, humbled under the stroke of adversity, is more than ever disposed to the exercise of all the pious and benevolent affections, increasing in love to God, and in good-will to man.

To the doctrine of the Stoic school, that "pain is no evil," few who have severely experienced its formidable discipline will now be inclined to subscribe. But that it is an evil unmixed with good, and that the good does not greatly preponderate, none will assert to whom afflictions of every sort would not have been sent equally in vain.

As it is impossible to give attention to the sufferings of a fellow-creature, without experiencing the tender emotions of pity and compassion, accompanied by the generous desire of relieving the pain we witness, the sufferings of our fellow-creatures open a field for the exercise of affections which improve the heart; and as pain and sickness are too frequent not to afford to all of us opportunities of exercising the benevolent sympathies of our nature, it is only by withdrawing our attention from suffering objects, that we can avoid cultivating those affections, which, by attention, would be habitually exercised. By the fre-

quent examples of suffering, we are reminded of the precarious tenure on which we also hold our present exemption from similar calamity; we are thus rendered humble, and humility is essential to benevolence.

Let us now inquire, what are the benefits which the sufferer himself may derive from the discipline under which he groans? If his mind be spared; if, in the midst of anguish, he be still master of his thoughts, what are the nature of those trains of ideas which will in these circumstances be introduced? Will they be such as usually attend the impulse to enlarge the idea of self, and be made up of the objects that usually afford gratification to that propensity? Where the selfish principle has obtained a complete ascendency in the heart, this may doubtless be the case. The hours of pain and sickness have been spent by tyrants in forming schemes of ambition, and by the vain and frivolous in dreams of vanity. But these are not the objects to which

sickness naturally directs the attention. It naturally leads the thoughts to Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death, and consequently produces all the affections which such contemplations are calculated to inspire. It increases our faith in the divine government, and teaches us dependance on the divine mercies. It puts to flight all those exaggerated notions of self, which the rich are too apt to entertain when fostered by the smile of prosperity; and by the consciousness of our own weakness, and of the degree in which we depend on the good offices and kind assistance of our fellow-creatures, increases the operation of the benevolent affections. It does more; for, besides the gratitude inspired by a sense of the kindness that is shown towards us, by directing our attention to those circumstances which afford us comfort in the midst of suffering, it makes us sensible of numerous blessings in our lot, which in the hours of health and prosperity pass unnoticed; and

thus raises our hearts to the supreme Benefactor, invigorates our faith, and strengthens our renewed purposes of obedience.

If disease produces a tendency to peevishness, irritability, or dejection, it thereby affords additional means of improving us in the grace of humility; for what so humbling to human pride, as to find the inefficiency of the will to regulate the dispositions? In this respect it ought also to prove salutary, as producing an increase of forbearance and charity. For if, from the consciousness of having found it extremely difficult to struggle against the temper to which disease produced a tendency, we become willing to ascribe all the instances of our own failure to bodily infirmity, and not to depravity of disposition, we surely cannot avoid putting the same charitable construction on the behaviour of others; and in learning thus to construe all that is evidently the result of casual

impulse, we provide a perpetual support to our benevolence.

That all these benefits may result from the loss of health, and that it is in our own power to enjoy them to their full extent, and thus to convert one of the most formidable evils of the present life into a means of augmenting, in an incalculable degree, the happiness of our existence, must surely be allowed to afford a striking argument of the divine benevolence.

With respect to the sufferings we are destined to endure, in consequence of the indulgence of our own evil passions and propensities, as they tend to correct our erroneous notions concerning the objects in which we place our happiness, and to convince us, that by the law of our nature punishment is inseparably attached to sin, their beneficent purpose is sufficiently obvious. No bodily pain, however intense or agonizing, is to be compared to the

agonies of remorse. But as the remorse of an awakened conscience is the appointed means of Providence to lead the human soul to repentance, and repentance to produce anew the fruits of righteousness,—remorse, which is the most poignant suffering to which we are in the present state exposed, is also the greatest proof of the divine mercy.

Thus we perceive the goodness of God to be alike conspicuous in every dispensation; and that whether doomed, during the present transitory scene, to suffer or to enjoy, we are alike experiencing the fruits of boundless love, dispensed by unerring wisdom. If we do not reject the means which the divine Being has appointed for cultivating those affections on which he has been pleased to stamp the signet of approbation, we shall, in every state, whether of suffering or enjoyment, be animated and supported by the exhilarating influence of hope;—Hope, not that delusive meteor

arising from the exhalations of corrupted fancy, but hope emanating from the Sun of righteousness, and shining to enlighten and to cheer, becoming brighter as the day of life advances, and irradiating its closing scene with beams of everlasting glory!

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